This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

C 1136.10.15 (2)

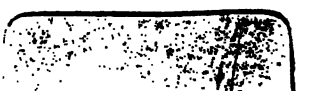
HARVARD COLLEGE
LIBRARY

THE GIFT OF

CHESTER NOYES GREENOUGH

CLASS OF 1898

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH



THE

WORKS

OF

JOSEPH STEVENS BUCKMINSTER;

WITH

MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

BOSTON:
JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY.
M DCCC XXXIX.

C 1136.10.15 (2),

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
GIFT OF
CHESTER NOYES GREENOUGH

JAN 15 1920

HARVARD UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Entered, according to act of Congress, in the year 1839, by JAMES MUNROE & Co., in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

CAMBRIDGE PRESS:
METCALF, TORRY, AND BALLOU.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE SECOND COLLECTION OF SERMONS.

THE wish has been often expressed by the friends of Mr. Buckminster, particularly by those to whom his sermons were first addressed, that a further selection from them might be printed. The volume already published contains many of his most valued sermons, and the friends, by whom the choice was made, faithfully discharged their duty to the reputation of Mr. Buckminster, while subjecting it to the severe test of a posthumous publication. But those, who were his hearers, are aware that many of his sermons remained unpublished, not less adapted to the ends of religious instruction than those contained in the first volume.

In offering to the public a further selection, the friends of Mr. Buckminster are, therefore, confident that they shall make a highly useful addition to the stock of works adapted to promote the best influences of Christianity.

Few collections of sermons have been so favorably received as the former volume; and a firm persuasion is entertained, that the additional volume, which is now presented to the Christian community, will prove in no degree less acceptable.

Boston, May, 1829.

CONTENTS

OF VOLUME II.

SERMONS — SECOND COLLECTION.

Page

SERMON I.

The providence of God, as displayed in nature.

ROMANS xi. 36. For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things 3

SERMON II.

Our lot in life not at our own disposal, but ordered by God.

PROVERBS xvi. 9. A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps 18

SERMON III.

The evidences of a future retribution.

ROMANS ii. 16. In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel . 32

SERMON IV.

The disclosures of the future judgment.

Same text 43

Page

SERMON V.

The nature and mode of the future life.

1 Corinthians xiii. 10. When that, which is perfect, is come, then that, which is in part, shall be done away . 53

SERMON VI.

The spiritual nature of the kingdom of Christ.

John xviii. 36. Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world 65

SERMON VII.

Misapprehensions as to the nature of religion.

Romans xiv. 17. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost 77

SERMON VIII.

Religious seriousness.

Matthew xxii. 5. But they made light of it, and went their ways 92

SERMON IX.

The providence of God, as displayed in revelation.

Acts xv. 18. Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world 104

SERMON X.

The sources of infidelity.

Hebrews iii. 12. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief . . . 115

Page

SERMON XI.

Consistency in religion.

MATTHEW vi. 24. No man can serve two masters . 130

SERMON XII.

The inadequacy of the prevailing conceptions as to the extent of the divine law, compared with the morality of the gospel.

PSALM cxix. 96. Thy commandment is exceeding broad 143

SERMON XIII.

The common mistakes on the subject of happiness, and its true sources.

PSALM iv. 6. There be many that say, Who will show us any good? 164

SERMON XIV.

The temptations of the young.

MATTHEW vi. 13. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil 177

SERMON XV.

Religious sincerity.

1 CORINTHIANS v. 8. But with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth 190

Page

SERMON XVI.

The peculiar blessings of our social condition as American citizens.

MARK v. 19. Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee . . 202

(Preached on the occasion of the annual State Thanksgiving, 1809.)

SERMON XVII.

The practicableness of the example of our Savior.

HEBREWS iii. 1. Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus 215

SERMON XVIII.

The history and character of the apostle John, and the friendship which subsisted between him and his Master.

JOHN xiii. 23. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved . . . 229

SERMON XIX.

Subjects for self-examination on the last day of the year.

LUKE xvi. 2. Give an account of thy stewardship . 242

SERMON XX.

Sources of the common misapprehensions of God.

PSALM l. 21. Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself 253

Page

SERMON XXI.

The influence of practice on the belief and understanding of the gospel.

JOHN vii. 17. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself 265

SERMON XXII.

The disappointments and uncertainties of life.

ECCLESIASTES i. 14. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit 281

OCCASIONAL DISCOURSES.

On the death of Governor James Sullivan . . 297

On the death of the Rev. William Emerson . . 318

Right hand of fellowship at the ordination of the Rev. Charles Lowell 335

The Dangers and Duties of Men of Letters; pronounced before the Society of Φ. B. K. 339

EXTRACTS FROM SERMONS.

The love of God 365

The character and testimony of Judas . . . 376

Our Savior's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem 385

Page

The circumstances and benevolence of the primitive Christians 400

God omnipresent 411

The choice and service of religion 415

Family religion 423

Why is death terrible? 430

SERMONS.

SECOND SELECTION.

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

ROMANS XI. 36.

FOR OF HIM, AND THROUGH HIM, AND TO HIM, ARE ALL THINGS.

THERE is no habit of the mind, which gives such uniform and equable satisfaction as that which refers every event, in the course of our own or of others' experience, to God, the only proper agent. In a world so full as this of sudden and strange vicissitudes, it is of great importance to believe, steadfastly and cordially, that no event takes place which has not been foreseen; that no agent, animate or inanimate, operates uncontrolled; and that all the wills of all voluntary beings in creation are subordinate to the irresistible volitions of the Ruler of creation. It is common enough, to hear the providence of God generally and indistinctly acknowledged in extraordinary events, especially in those which bear with them an impressive character of moral retribution. But this is very different from that habitual, enduring persuasion of the unlimited and uninterrupted providence of God in everything, which attends the Christian, in sorrow and in joy, in security and in danger, in private and in public, in our business and our

devotions, in youth and in age, in time and in eternity. It might be supposed, that the man, who had once attained to the grand and impressive conviction, that there is a God, would never forget it; that the idea would intrude itself upon every occasion, and be associated with every event. But we find, alas! that it is not so. Everything seems an object of attention, but the Being without whose aid we could attend to nothing. Men resort to a thousand inferior and secondary causes, as if it were enough, to admit that there is one superior cause, but it is too remote or too incomprehensible to arrest their regard. To account for what we know, we rest upon what we can see, and look not beyond creatures like ourselves, while God sits silently and sublimely at the head of all things, secretly guiding the complicated motions of his universe.

The belief of a providence is of little value, unless it become a habit of the mind. It is of little consequence, that we see God in the whirlwind, or in the awful convulsions of nature, if, as soon as the whirlwind has passed over, or the shaking earth is steadfast again, the mighty agent is forgotten. Our religious impressions of God's power are intended for daily use, and not for extreme circumstances, or awful and interesting situations. If we acknowledge not God in prosperity, we cannot trust him in adversity; if we see him not in the regular occurrences of nature, we shall be wakened by the extraordinary, only to a sentiment of indistinct and stupifying fear.

Still, however, there are periods in our own lives, and in the affairs of the world, when we pause and feel uncertain of our former convictions. When we see the good and pious defeated in all their plans, always frustrated, and always suffering; the vicious triumphing in prosperity;

the unprincipled elevated to power; the infidel boasting himself above every name that is called God; shadows of doubt will, at intervals, fly across the most pious mind, and sometimes rest long upon the strongest understanding.

It is to revive, and not to generate, in your minds, a belief of the supreme control of the great Disposer of events, that I propose now to give you the reasons on which this belief of God's providence is founded.

The general idea of a providence is so clear and so common that it needs not to be explained. God, we acknowledge, governs the universe. In the motions of the inanimate part of creation his power is easily acknowledged; for, as we know that nothing can move itself, we are ready to admit the impulse of a superior agent. But we see not so clearly how the power of God can extend to the voluntary acts of intelligent beings. Perhaps this difficulty will be sufficiently removed by simply granting, that, as far as God has given to any class of beings the power of governing themselves, so far his own immediate agency is withdrawn. These, then, he governs by arranging and combining the circumstances in which these beings are placed, and by so overruling and controlling their determinations that they shall always, directly or indirectly, advance his purposes, and accomplish his designs. It is easy also to discern that whatever power has the unlimited control of the inanimate part of creation, and determines the situation of the material world, must also have the living world equally at his disposal; for so intimately is every part of nature, animate, inanimate, and rational, connected, and so continually dependent is man upon the influence of exterior objects, that it is instantaneously felt,

that whoever has the government of the one possesses, of necessary consequence, that of the other.

By the providence of God I understand that all creatures, animate and intelligent, are continued in existence by his power, and furnished by his bounty with the means of preservation; that their station in the scale of being is ordained by his wisdom, the period of their lives terminated by his previous appointment, their number multiplied or diminished by his ordination, and their circumstances, in any period of their existence, precisely those which he determines and circumscribes. By the providence of God I mean that not one in the vast variety of events is accidental or fortuitous; that of the continual changes in mind or matter God is not ignorant, even for a moment; that not a motion in creation takes place, which he has not foreseen, or for which he has not provided, or to which he is not present; that the will of every agent is subordinate to his, and accomplishes his purposes; that the situation of every particle of matter, of every insect, bird, beast, man, or angel, or whatever other existences there may be which we know not, is, at every moment of time, precisely that which God ordains, and nothing else. I mean that the world, natural and moral, is never, for an instant, without an administration. Never is the Supreme Power ignorant or inattentive, never inefficient, never wavering. Whatever appears to resist the will of God at the same time accomplishes his purposes; whatever coöperates with his will coöperates not without his knowledge, his direction, his superintendence.

Do you ask me whence I draw these conclusions? I answer, first, from the very nature of God. You acknowledge that he is a spirit. But what is your idea of a

spirit? Is it not of something incorporeal, intelligent, and inherently active? Can you imagine an intellectual force universally diffused throughout creation, which is, for a moment, idle or unemployed? Can that spirit, which formed the universe, avoid animating, sustaining, moving, and operating upon it? I cannot conceive of intellect that is inactive. It must be ever in exertion, sustaining existence, producing events, forming purposes, accomplishing designs. I cannot conceive a more unintelligible or unworthy idea of God than to suppose that he remains inactive at the head of creation, creating worlds, and leaving them to their fate, with a plenitude of power which has been but once exerted, with an unlimited intellect never exercised, never displayed.

Again; the necessary omnipresence of God proves also his providence. What! is he present at every point of space, and knows not the movements which take place in his universe? Imagine him filling all nature with his influence, extending through all space, moving in all motion, enduring through all duration, animating everything that lives, thinking in all that thinks, acting, throughout innumerable worlds, in the mutual gravitation which keeps them from rushing into chaos, and can you avoid the conclusion, that his providence extends, with himself, through all nature? Consider that he perceives, at one and the same moment, whatever exists, and whatever changes, and that, at one and the same moment, he exerts the whole of his energy throughout the immense range of creation, and can you, for an instant, doubt his providence and his government? Is he present, and does he not act; or is he present, and does he not instantaneously perceive; or does he know, and is his knowledge useless; does he act, and is his agency without

foresight or purpose? No, the very term, providence, includes the notion of foresight, and may be illustrated also from the omniscience of Deity, another necessary attribute.

It may be difficult to give you a clear notion of that power by which God embraces within his actual knowledge the present, the past, and the future. But, perhaps, your conceptions may be assisted by recollecting that things appear past or present to us, in consequence of the continued succession of our thoughts, passing one at a time through our minds; for thus only we get the idea of duration. But, since in the intellect of God, in consequence of its infinite diffusion in every part of creation, innumerable ideas must exist, at the same instant, of all that happens in that creation, of course that succession of individual thoughts, which alone furnishes us with the idea of duration, can have no place in the Divine mind. For, if we can suppose two ideas to be contemplated, at the same precise moment, in any mind, we may suppose any indefinite number; the idea of succession is lost. Therefore we may conclude that what to us, and to all beings with minds like ours, appears past, or present, or future, exists simultaneously in the Divine mind, comprehended in one glance, present at one and the same moment. This eternal *now* includes all that we call endless duration; a duration, if I may say so, in the mind of God always instantaneous. Hence he comprehends, at the same moment, the origin, the progress, and the termination of every event; at the same moment, the meditated plan, the progress, and the development of creation; at the same moment, every motion of every man's will, whether abortive or effectual; at the same moment, the birth, life, and death of every

creature now living, or that has ever lived; at the same moment are present to his mind all the grand eras of history, the most interesting periods of time, the most remotely connected events of the past and of the future. The fate of every man and every angel, of every country and every world, of every unorganized atom, and every organized system, is discerned simultaneously by the great Omniscient, through the successive periods of their continuance. And is all this knowledge without purpose, without wisdom, without design, without use? It cannot be admitted. From the very nature, then, of God, we see the necessity of his providence, the regularity and universality of his administration.

The second proof of the government of God's providence is drawn from his being the Creator. Can it be supposed, that he, who made the universe, lost all interest in it, as soon as the act of creation had passed? Would he bestow powers, and not be curious to know how they were exercised? Would he adjust a stupendous system, and not wait to observe its operation? Would he have peopled the world with intelligences, and have taught them to know that they had a celestial Father, and then have left them, cast, as it were, upon a desolate island in the boundless ocean of the universe, to struggle through a solitary existence, abandoned by the very Being who may be supposed to love them the most tenderly, because they were the creatures of his power? Suppose it for his glory, that they were created; is it not as much for his glory, to sustain and control them? Suppose they are prepared for his pleasure; and is his pleasure exhausted at the first view of creation? Did he bring the world and its inhabitants into existence from a principle of benevolence? Suppose this,

(and it is the only rational hypothesis,) and the conclusion is irresistible, that benevolence must be equally engaged in sustaining, guiding, guarding, and perfecting his creation. I appeal to you, ye fathers and mothers. Did your interest in your children cease from the moment that they were ushered into life? Would you leave them, from that moment, to their fate? I appeal to that interest which you take in their growth, their fortunes, and their end, an interest which increases with their years, and their improvement. And is it to be supposed, that a care like this, which in man is esteemed an excellence, is not to be found in the great Parent of mankind? "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children," is it to be believed, that God has left the world unguarded and unobserved, and that his children are born and die he knows not how, and cares not when? Where is the architect who would leave a nice and curious machine, which was acknowledged to be an illustrious monument of his skill, to fall into disuse and decay in consequence of his neglect? And has God, the great mechanician, left the system, which he has so curiously composed, to the revolutions of unnumbered ages, undirected by one who can understand its complicated motions, preserve in place its innumerable parts, restore its irregularities, and guide its movements to the grand and glorious purpose for which alone it was constructed?

Thirdly. As I am adducing reasons rather than appealing to testimony, it is not my design, to bring forward the direct assertions of Scripture in favor of the doctrine of this discourse. But I cannot refuse myself this remark, that the single circumstance, that a revelation has ever been made to mankind, is an irresistible demonstration of a providence, whatever the character, the design, the reception,

or the fate of that revelation may be. It proves that the affairs of men are not overlooked; that God sometimes discerns the benevolent propriety of immediately interposing in the course of events; that the progress of man's character and improvement is not so unalterably fixed by what are called the laws of nature that it may not sometimes be accelerated by special assistance; and, if God's love has ever induced him to overstep what may be called the ordinary limits of his bounty, for the more certain and rapid felicity of his creatures, what may we not conclude respecting the final issue of his universal government of the world?

Again; if it can be shown, that a single prophecy has been fulfilled, the same conclusion is irresistible; for prediction implies the most intimate knowledge of characters and events, with all their connexions, bearings, and dependences; and, whether the prediction is made merely from a foresight of the event, or whether the event is afterwards determined and the circumstances arranged to accomplish the prediction, the conclusion is the same. Look, then, I pray you, at the series of prophecies which the Scriptures contain, and tell me, can you find nothing there which has been accomplished, nay, nothing which is, perhaps, even now accomplishing?

Lastly, let us come to the proof from fact. Look around upon creation, and observe the good order of the universe; powers nicely adjusted, systems accurately balanced, worlds rushing undisturbed, with astonishing and noiseless rapidity, through fields of immeasurable space, where nothing interferes, nothing stops, but all is inconceivably vast and harmonious, and answer me, what preserves this complex wonder of a world? Is it less neces-

sary, that some power should continue, than that some power should have established it? Whence the regularity of summer and winter, seed-time and harvest? Is there no care in this? Whence the unfailing succession of the generations of men? Whence the ordinary regularity of their numbers, the progressive perfection of the species, the prodigious variety of the individuals, the curiously accommodated circumstances, characters, and stations of men in the world? Is there no providence in this?

But it is not in great operations that the intelligence, and, consequently, the providence of God is to be most clearly discerned. It is evident in a thousand minute and accurate adaptations of man's nature, and of every other creature's nature, to his place in the system.

If you ask why the birds were not placed in the sea, and the fishes in the air, I can give no answer but that such is the ordination of their Creator. They were made for the element in which they live; and you may say, if you please, that it was chance that produced this distribution, and believe it, if you can.

But the most easy proof of the providence of God in the visible works of his hands is found, I think, in the power of foresight and anticipation, with which man is endowed. We are enabled to look forward into futurity, to provide for what is to come, to form ardent expectations, and cherish reasonable hopes. If God, then, has given the power to a rational creature to make provision beyond the present moment, does it not prove irresistibly that the bestower of this faculty and this disposition possesses them in perfection himself, that he knows and is interested in what is to come, that he has provided beforehand for his creatures? And, if his providence extends, for a single

day, or a single hour, I ask why does it not for every day? why not for eternity? Is there any fallacy in this conclusion?

But, perhaps, the proof is more striking in the instincts of animals, where the immediate provision of Heaven is to be seen without the aid of any intermediate intelligence. Whence, then, does the ant lay up in summer her winter's food? Do you suppose that she looks forward to that inclement season? Has she a spirit of prophecy? Or does God thus provide, without her knowledge, for her continued support? And if for her, — your own hearts, my hearers, will draw the inference. It has been justly remarked, that this instinct is as indisputable an argument for divine providence as if God, by miraculous interposition, should annually send an angel to lay up in store for this industrious people a provision for their future wants.

I should delight, my hearers, to retrace, with you, the history of the world, and accumulate, with you, the proofs of God's providence. I should delight to follow, with you, the footsteps of a Divinity in the mighty revolutions of society, to show you the most important events springing from the most inconsiderable causes, and the ever progressive march of human affairs defeating the predictions of the wisest, and proving a great Controller. I would show you good arising unexpectedly from evil, the sure melioration of the world following the most desperate position of human affairs, and the designs of Providence abundantly developed. I would show you the dissolution of the mightiest empires terminating in the happiest results; wars, pestilence, and convulsions forwarding the kindest designs; the knowledge of God continually preserved and continually increasing under circumstances, in human estimation,

the most unfavorable. Especially might I dwell upon the peculiar situation of the Jews, and their miraculous dispersion, with the knowledge which they alone possessed; the fulness of the time in which the Messiah was born, with the extraordinary situation of the world, exactly what it should be, for the best dissemination of his religion.

Then, if more proofs were wanting, I would appeal to every individual's life; and the history of every pious, and, I may say, of every impious heart, would testify all things were of God.

From the explanations I have given, and from the course of my remarks, it must have appeared, that there is no foundation for the usual distinction between a general and a particular providence; for so intimate are the mutual dependences of animate and inanimate creation, that no providence can be general which includes not every individual being, and the same arguments, which prove that God takes notice of anything, prove that his providence extends equally to all.

It shall now be my object, to produce some practical reflections from this most interesting subject.

"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." How grand, then, is God! Christians, have you ever contemplated the wonderful magnificence of this Controller of the universe? "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" The human mind, trying to form a conception vast enough to embrace the peculiar grandeur of God, feels the insufficiency of its powers, and finds, astonished, how narrow is its boasted capacity. We find, that, to understand his excellence by a

single act of comprehension, we must possess a mind equal to his own. I say, then, again, how inexpressibly great is that Being who penetrates, at once, the recesses, and circumscribes within himself the boundless ranges of creation; who pierces into the profound meditations of the most sublime intelligence above, with the same ease that he discerns the wayward projects of the child; who knows equally the abortive imaginations and the wisest plans of every creature that ever has thought, or that ever will think, throughout the realms of intellect! How transcendent that Mind to which all other minds are infinitely inferior, from the lofty seraph that stands near his throne, down to the poor idiot who is incapable of forming a conception of his Maker! How vast that comprehension to which all the sciences of all the ages of the world are not less simple, nor less intelligible, than the first proposition of the infant's earliest lesson! How wonderful is that power which wields, with equal ease, the mightiest and the feeblest agents; directs the resistless thunderbolt, or wafts a feather through the air; bursts out in the imprisoned lava, or rests on the peaceful bosom of the lake; rides on the rapid whirlwind, or whispers in the evening air! Think, I pray you, of that wisdom which conducts, at the same moment, the innumerable purposes of all his creatures, and whose own grand purpose is equally accomplished by the failure or by the success of all the plans of all his creatures. Think of him under whom all agents operate, because by him all beings exist. Think of him who has but to will it, and all moving nature pauses in her course, chaos succeeds to the harmony of innumerable spheres, and eternal darkness overwhelms this universe of light. Yet, in the midst of darkness, his throne is stable, and all is light about the seat

of God. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it."

If the knowledge of God is thus extensive and minute, and his power so irresistible, surely, his favor, my friends, must be of infinite importance to every creature upon earth. Suppose you had secured the friendship of every power in the universe, and that even the world of invisible spirits waited upon your orders and guarded your life; leave but God your enemy, and what is the worth of your security? Let him be but your enemy, and what power on earth or in heaven could protect you? But, on the contrary, if he is your friend, you have nothing to fear. The hatred of man is transitory, the love of God is eternal. If all the elements were combined against you, if all your plans were defeated, your sorrows multiplied with every return of day, and the calumny of every breath in creation poured upon your character, if God is but your friend, princes shall envy you, worldly greatness shall bow to yours, the rich and mighty shall wish to change with you their lot, and the wicked will look up with reverence to the man whom God delighteth to honor. Let God be your friend, and the dark course of your life shall terminate in light, your integrity shall burst out, at last, like the noonday, and the light of God's countenance shall rest in glory on your head. If God is your friend, all things are yours, whether life or death, things present or to come, time and eternity.

My friends, would to God it were as easy, to persuade you to a temper and conduct correspondent to this belief in God's providence, as it is, to persuade you of its truth! Forget not, I pray you, that in this great Being "we live, and move, and have our being;" nothing befalls us, which

he does not accomplish; nothing befalls us, which he cannot prevent. He is everywhere; above, below, around; nay, more, he is within us. He knows, therefore, the secrets of the heart. Love him, then, for what is past; but, whether you may trust him, or fear him, for what is to come, God only knoweth!

SERMON II.

PROVERBS XVI. 9.

A MAN'S HEART DEVISETH HIS WAY; BUT THE LORD DIRECTETH HIS STEPS.

THAT the providence of God extends to the minutest concerns in the life of every man, and that, how often soever we may be disappointed or lost in the uncertainties which appear to surround us, God's designs proceed steadily to their accomplishment, and that these designs are invariably benevolent in their progress, though sometimes their tendency is not immediately seen, are truths which have impressed themselves so strongly on my own conviction that I cannot avoid wishing they may be felt with equal force by you, my Christian friends. No man, I think, can have passed half the term of human existence, without discovering, that, more than once, his projects have been frustrated, his courses altered, his buds of hope blasted, and the lofty fabric of his expectations overthrown, he knows not how, nor whence, nor wherefore. No man, I think, would venture deliberately to offend the almighty Disposer of his lot, could he but realize the completeness of his dependence upon him. In the bustle of human exertion, it is almost impossible to keep this sentiment in active and uninterrupted exercise. With a view, then, of making a pious impression on our hearts, I shall attempt,—

First, To show how little our external situation in life has depended on ourselves; and,—

Secondly, To prove, that, if our circumstances were more at our own disposal, and our wishes more frequently accomplished, we should, probably, be less happy than we are at present.

To show you how little our lot in the world has been in our own hands, it is not necessary to carry you back to those hours when you were waiting for life, or the little spark of existence, just kindled, was trembling under every passing breath of casualty. It is not necessary to dwell upon the days of your infancy, when it was, every minute, doubtful, whether the being, that had been introduced into life, would live long enough to understand that he had a life to preserve. We will pass over those days of boyhood, when the understanding is not ripe enough to form plans, and when the forethought, just appearing, extends no further than to the pleasures, hardly to the evils, of the morrow. We will pass over, too, the remaining years of minority, when the imagination just begins to know its own alacrity, and, fertile in youthful projects, leaps forward from one year to another of a life long in prospect, touching every object it meets with the tints of hope. The whole of this early period, though it often gives a lasting color to the remainder of life, is so little within our own power, and is so seldom influenced by any plans which we are then capable of forming, that it would be superfluous to insist longer upon the conclusion we would draw from it.

There is a time, however, when every man begins to feel something of his own self-sufficiency, when we choose the pursuits we mean to follow, mark out what we imagine to be the road to happiness, and, thus prepared, enter on

the wide and busy scene of active life. From this period, then, when you think you have taken the thread of your fortunes into your own hands, allow me to follow you a few steps.

The first fact, which shows us how little our present situation is the result of our own arrangements, is the innumerable defeats every man's plans encounter. I appeal to any one who has lived long in the world, whether, at any period of his life, he has found himself in the precise circumstances he expected. This certainty of disappointment results from more than one source. In the first place, so various and complicated are human interests, so inordinate are many of our desires, and so unreasonable are others, that two individuals can hardly form extensive plans of conduct, which shall not interfere, if not by direct collision, at least in some subordinate parts, so as to affect the issue of the whole. What a range of disappointment does this single fact open! The success of one half the human race is the partial disappointment of the other. From this single source of disappointment, however real or imaginary, — the contrariety of human interests, — you see how much of your destiny on earth is placed, at once, out of your control.

It would be impossible to enumerate all the causes of the failure of our plans. One, however, which, more, perhaps, than any other, shows the folly of far extended projects, is the uncertainty of health, a blessing which is attended with no perceptible sensation of pleasure, but which is indispensable to the full enjoyment of every other pleasure. And is this a good which is within the reach of human foresight? I ask you, young man, who have been forming extensive plans of future eminence, you, who are so busy,

while the worm of disease is secretly feeding at the seat of life, and sucking the bloom of health from your cheek; I ask you, laborious man of business, whose plans have attained all the excellence which maturity of mind, long experience, and increasing confidence can give them, have you never felt pains which warn you of your mortality? Have you never laid your head upon the pillow with a foreboding, that to-morrow might sweep you and your projects into oblivion?

What then! Is man the arbiter of his own fate, when the least mite, that floats in God's air, may derange the whole system of the human constitution? Is man the being to forget that his lot is not within his own disposal, when the first breeze may waft pestilence to his heart, and the first exhalation, which rises up under his nostrils, may poison the source of his being; and, if he partially recover, leave him a life of debility, of inactivity, perhaps of pain and misery? Go to the tombstones, and read there the records of human disappointments. The heads, which are now mouldering in those narrow cells, once teemed with plans as probable as yours.

A second remark, which should satisfy us that our present situation is not the result of our own foresight, is this: that most of the pleasures, we have met with in life, were entirely unexpected; and, of our successes also, how few have been the direct consequences of our plans! The very phrase, "good fortune," intimates this. It implies a happiness which was not premeditated, which was not the object of our calculations, not the fair result of any of the plans we have been laboriously forming. How many have vaulted into seats of power, lifted, by the agitation of the times, into places to which they once dared not raise a

thought! What has raised the men who fill up such a space in history, but who make such blanks in creation, but the combinations of circumstances, which they never foresaw, and tides in human affairs, upon which they never calculated?

But it is not necessary to mount so high for examples. Enumerate, I beseech you, the pleasant circumstances of a single day, and tell me, How many of them came within your anticipations? What are the pleasures which constitute the ordinary, therefore, I may say, the principal, happiness of human life, and attach us so strongly to existence? Are they not the little, domestic, unsought comforts, which one man enjoys almost as well as another? And was it for these common pleasures of life, that you have been all along spreading your nets? No, my friends, acknowledge it was not. It was for the glittering, the envied, the distinguished blessings. You thought you should be miserable, if you did not obtain these; and so you would have been, had not the all-wise Disposer of human affairs ordered better the sources of human happiness. If he had left us to look out for all the little circumstances that make life agreeable, the whole of human felicity would be lost in the toil and weariness of providing for it. No, my friends, the prodigious variety of little circumstances, which make up the daily comfort of life, is not what we seek, but what meets us every hour. Happiness is like the invisible, elastic fluid which we breathe. If we were compelled to seek the pure air which supports respiration, our breath would be soon exhausted in the pursuit.

A third remark only will I make, to add to the weight of proof, that our actual situations in life have been much less in our power than the show of human activity would

lead us, at first, to suppose. If you have passed the meridian of your days, I am sure you are sensible that no unvarying plan has hitherto conducted you. Ask that old man, who has approached so feebly the term of his life, and is now looking back upon the days as they roll away behind him; ask him, how often he has changed his courses, how often he has measured back his steps. Ask him, if much of the short period which is allotted to this busy life has not been spent in recovering what has been lost, in framing new speculations, in guarding against new defeats, in altering even what once appeared to be his ultimate views. It is, indeed, often supposed, that much of the misfortune of human affairs is the consequence of the instability of our purposes, and the perpetual changes of our plans. But, perhaps, the very contrary is often the case. For who has not found, that, by an obstinate adherence to his own plans, or too great confidence in the infallibility of former conclusions, opportunities are continually lost, and many a life worn out in discontentment, and hopes never realized, which might otherwise have been conducted in triumph under the banners of success? What, then, is the conclusion from this fact? That, in order to secure the greatest prosperity, it is necessary to change often our pursuits, and even our ultimate views? Or is it not this: that, in consequence of the narrowness of our comprehension, our best plans are so liable to defeat that it is absurd, in any case, to say that the situation, in which we find ourselves, is the direct result of our own contrivance, and, of course, that our lot in life is at our own disposal?

The second division of our subject now calls for our attention. In this I proposed to show you, that, even if our circumstances in life were more at our own disposal, and

our views more frequently accomplished, we should find that we had consulted our own happiness much less frequently and successfully than it is now provided for by what we call the uncertainties and accidents of life.

No doubt, most men, at the close of their days, imagine, that, if they were to begin life again, they should conduct it with more prudence, and, probably, with greater success. But even this common sentiment we know to be extremely fallacious. How much more doubtful, then, or erroneous, are the notions of those who are entering into life, and who imagine, that, if they were once permitted to make their own fortunes, they should infallibly make their own felicity!

In this age of accumulation the majority, perhaps, of mankind, if allowed to have their first wish, would place themselves immediately in the possession of wealth. A few might be found of moderate desires, but most men would rush, at once, into opulence, under the vain expectation, that they were insuring a perpetuity of good, in every treasure they deposited for future supply. As soon, however, as the first flush of acquisition is over, if you ask them whether they have found that wealth is happiness, they will tell you that they have made a deplorable mistake. They will tell you that they have found, to their astonishment, that the care of preserving property was as painful as the anxiety of procuring it, and that to possess was not to enjoy. They will tell you that they have found innumerable pleasures which wealth did not assist them to enjoy, many which it strangely interrupted, and a few from which it had completely excluded them. Recollect, too, my friends, that these persons, whom we have now allowed to choose their situation in life, have chosen it for life.

They are to be rich men, rich men only, and rich men forever. Infallible disposers of your own lot! you shall be allowed another trial.

Your ruling passion, then, is fame. Let my life, you say, be short, if it be but brilliant. I will live, though but for an hour here, yet will I live in the admiration of posterity; though seen and gazed at but for a little time by my contemporaries, I shall return, like a comet, in the revolutions of centuries, to be the wonder of a remote generation. Riches I disdain, for they are accessible to any man; health I am proud to sacrifice; power I value not, except as it belongs to mind; station, in the common, interested grades of society, I am ashamed to aspire to; mind is my kingdom; obscurity only is my dread; to be unknown is what alone can make me miserable. A life may be celebrated even because it is short. Let me float, though it be but a day, a beautiful meteor on the breath of popularity. I have chosen my lot in life. Grant my wish, and I am happy. Vain man! it is granted. You are envied, depreciated, sacrificed. Pale, with the laurels round your brow, you have succeeded; but success cannot restore the color of health, which the anxiety of being applauded has worn away from your cheek. Your temper, too, is ruined; you have become unnaturally sensitive to every word or look which threatens you with censure; painfully jealous of those whom you ought to love; insensible of the clearest worth of your competitors; consumed with a feverish thirst for admiration, or swollen with a solitary pride, which shuts you out from half the pleasures of sympathy, and from half the joys of benevolence. This world, then, is no longer agreeable than while it praises you; therefore you make friends with the next generation, which shall neither love

nor hate, neither flatter nor betray you. This, then, is the portion you have chosen: to be applauded, instead of being loved, to be proud, instead of being happy; and you are rewarded by the unsubstantial honors in the gift of posterity, instead of the personal attachment of the generation in which you live. Do not say, my young friend, that I have deserted my first supposition, and that all this wretchedness is the attendant, not of fame attained, but of fame anxiously desired. The objection would be satisfactory, if the love of fame were a passion which could be quenched by the attainment of its objects. No, its appetite grows by what it feeds on.

It would be superfluous to mention more of cases which are so easily imagined. It is plain, that, if we were allowed to choose our future lot, we should all prefer some change from our present situation. This man would put himself forward a step in the ranks of society, and that would grasp at a little more power; one would seek, as we have supposed, for fame, another for wealth; some would choose uninterrupted health, and its attendant activity; others would prefer inactivity, quietness, security, and ease. But how is it, that all these sagacious arbiters of their own destiny have failed in the attainment of a common object? How is it, my friends, that, if left to ourselves, we should consult our own happiness less than it is already consulted by the uncertainties, the disappointments, the casualties of the present arrangement of human affairs? The reason is simply this: that happiness does not consist in external circumstances. Of course, arrange your situation in life as you please; surround yourself with wealth, power, influence, fame; still, if you bring not with you the temper most proper for your situation, you have lost, rather than

gained, by the privilege you have exercised. Such is the wisdom of God's providence, that the temper most proper for every situation can be formed only by feeling the very uncertainty on which that situation is granted.

I cannot leave this division of my subject without indulging some further speculations on the wisdom of these apparently uncertain arrangements of Providence.

However paradoxical it may appear, I will venture to assert, that, if the formation of our moral characters depended less than it now does upon unforeseen circumstances, in other words, if the virtues, which men sometimes exhibit, were placed more easily within their own power, we should, probably, be not only less happy, but even less virtuous than we now are. It is not too bold, to suggest that even a man under the influence of a pure moral principle, and aspiring after eminent attainments in goodness, if left to choose his own character, would neither consult his own true worth, nor his best happiness. We should see him carried away with false estimates of particular excellences. One man, transported with lofty notions of patriotism, or glowing with the flame of universal benevolence, to attain the moral reputation he most desired, would bend all the powers of his mind, and accommodate all the affections of his heart, to exhibit a character like Washington's or Howard's. Yet this man, though burning with a pure ambition of excellence, being unable to conceive completely what constitutes the perfection of this or that virtue, and not placed in precisely the situation of his model, would find himself ridiculous at the very summit of his attainments. He would find, that, in his wild pursuit of these splendid virtues, his private and particular affections had suffered. He would find that what he had gained in universal phil-

anthropy he had lost in individual sympathy; and you would, probably, discern that he was a less affectionate son, a less careful parent, a less useful private citizen. If patriotism or universal benevolence were to become his passion, you would find him sacrificing the great laws of mutual justice to the imagined interests of his own country, or of the world at large; and his moral sense, which was once a nice test of right and wrong in human actions, would be destroyed by too great familiarity with the maxims of national policy, or with the speculations of universal benevolence. Thus we may venture to predict that this man, when arrived at the summit of the excellence he most earnestly sought, would, in fact, be a man of less moral worth than if his character had been left to be formed by the plastic power of the common situation, uncertainties, disappointments, and casualties of life.

I will suppose another case in which a man shall be permitted to choose his own character. It is that of one impressed with a deep sense of the importance of religious opinions. He looks around on the world, and his heart aches, when he views the creatures of God perishing in ignorance of what, he thinks, can alone constitute their felicity. He glows with a zeal which to him appears the purest of human passions.

If he were to choose the character he would exhibit to the world, it would be that of a man passionately devoted to the progress of religious opinions. Nay, more, he would establish the character to which he aspires, if it were necessary, by marching cheerfully to the stake, and dying a martyr in the cause of his God. He is afraid of incurring the suspicion of lukewarmness, and would change any situation in life, if he could open a wider field for the exercise

of his zeal. But take care that you are not too impatient to burst the limited sphere in which God has placed you. Your zeal, if it had all the scope you wish, might break out into passion; your deep sense of the value of religious opinions might tread on the brink of uncharitableness; and your ardor for reform might, if your station would admit of it, lead you to reform by persecution instead of persuasion. No, my friend, trust the shaping of your character in the hands of Providence. He has placed you in circumstances where you are obliged to love men with whom you differ, and to coöperate with men whom you burn to reform. Sometimes God cools your ardor in his own cause by disappointments for which you cannot account; sometimes he places you in situations which you find it difficult to accommodate to your principles of conduct, and opens to you views which make you doubt the infallibility of your own conclusions. In short, God, by the circumstances and connexions in which you have been placed, has made you truly useful, whereas you might have been only zealous; he has kept you candid, when you might have been uncharitable; he has given you influence only, where you wanted power; and has preserved you, a mild example of the excellence of his religion, when your own enthusiasm might have dishonored the cause you had espoused, or your passions have led you to the stake, a vain and unprofitable martyr.

Indulge me, my friends, with one supposition more on this subject, and I have done.

Here is a man whose ruling passion is honor. If he were allowed to fashion his own reputation, he would be distinguished for an excessive sensibility which feels a stain as it would a wound. Influenced by the contemplation of

imaginary characters, he endeavors to form himself after the model of heroes he has admired in history, or characters that he has contemplated in the lustre of romance. But, as soon as this man enters into the world of actual existences, he finds that he has been preparing himself for a different sphere. He finds that the every-day virtues of sober and industrious citizens meet with a better reception than all the refinements of superior spirits, with the light of which he hoped to encircle his character. He begins to suspect that he has fashioned his feelings for a state of society which it is the amusement of romancers only to portray, and of enthusiasts to imagine, and that he has lost much of the happiness which he might have found in this mixed world, merely by seeking for beings which do not yet exist, and cherishing expectations which the ordinary race of his companions will delight to disappoint. He will wish in vain, that he had been cast, from his youth, among the roughnesses and disappointments of life, that he might have acquired a disposition adapted to the world in which he is to bustle; and, if God should once more allow this child of refinement to choose the character he would sustain in life, you will find him seeking for happiness in the customary track of human virtues.

You will recollect, my friends, that, in the beginning of this discourse, we hoped to establish two conclusions. First, that God alone disposes of our lot in life; and, secondly, that his arrangements are made with the kindest intentions toward every individual. These conclusions are most interesting, most important, and most consolatory.

Let us bow at the feet of the omniscient Being who orders our circumstances in life, and say: O God! I am ashamed of my pride, my discontent, and my vain expec-

tations. I have been disappointed in life, but it was thou who didst disappoint me, and I murmur not. I have been fortunate, but it was thy blessing which gave this unexpected success to my projects, and I am humble. If my plans had always succeeded, they would have interfered with the wise arrangements of thy providence, and, merely for my partial good, disconcerted the profound and extensive operations of thy wisdom and beneficence. When I look back upon my life, I see that thou hast trained me up, in the sure and progressive order of thy providence, to the character and the hopes which I now possess. When I have thought myself abandoned, thou hast been watching me with paternal care; when I supposed myself most miserable, I have found myself nearer to the acquisition of the only permanent good. The very circumstances of my life, which I thought the most inauspicious, I find the most favorable; and the very trials, which I thought would terminate in my misery or death, I now find had the most benevolent tendency, the most cheerful conclusion. My expectations have been often defeated, and my views altered, but I still find myself crowned with loving-kindness, and surrounded with opportunities for virtue and happiness. In all the events of life, then, I will bless thee. "Though the fig-tree should not blossom," and there should be no fruit in the budding vine of my hopes, yet will I bless the Lord, and "joy in the God of my salvation." I have trusted thee for this life, and, with sentiments like these in continual exercise, may I not trust thee, O God, for eternity?

SERMON III.

ROMANS II. 16.

IN THE DAY WHEN GOD SHALL JUDGE THE SECRETS OF MEN BY JESUS CHRIST, ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL.

THE doctrine of a future judgment, and consequent retribution, after death, is the first principle of all religion, and the foundation of all religious obedience. It supposes a Power above us, which observes, while it upholds; a Being from whom nothing in our character, or conduct, or destiny is hidden, and to whom it will be as easy to assign with equity our future condition as it was to appoint our present lot. It supposes that we are here on trial for eternity, that we know our obligations and our powers, and that we must hereafter render an account of our conduct. If it were true, that the revelations, which God has given us, had not expressly declared that there would be a day of judgment for every moral agent, it would not be the less probable, for the whole system of Christianity and the whole language of the Scriptures proceed on the supposition of such a retribution; and, whatever there may be of figure and embellishment in the descriptions which the gospel contains of this solemn proceeding, — whether the whole of this great transaction will be finished in one literal day, or the whole world be congregated in one great assembly,—the substantial truth of the doctrine is not affected,

that God will hereafter "judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ," and "render to every man according to his deeds."

There is a solemnity in this doctrine, which nothing in religion surpasses, and a reasonableness in it, which commends it to the wants and best judgments of men. No man can have lived long in the world, and not felt the secret conviction, that a day will come, when the inequalities of present fortune will be rectified, and the righteousness of God be displayed. Let us devote this day to the contemplation of this great doctrine of the gospel.

In reflecting upon it, we shall, first, attempt to observe some of the numerous indications of a moral government already commenced in the world;—

Secondly, from the imperfect degree to which it is here carried, notice the strong presumption we have for believing that it will be, at some time, completed;—

Thirdly, observe the assurance, which the gospel gives us, that such a judgment and retribution will take place hereafter.

First, then, we are to attend to some of the numerous indications of a moral and judicial government already commenced in the present state.

To a reflecting mind there can be no doubt that there is "a God that judgeth in the earth," or, in other words, that we are under a moral government. The very idea of the thing is almost sufficient to prove that such a government exists; for whence should the notions of right and wrong, merit and demerit, reward and punishment, arise, except from that constitution of things in which God has placed us? That course of providence or discipline, which generates the idea of virtue, and gives it its good character in our minds, indicates the intention of that God who loveth

righteousness, and hateth iniquity. To the same point also tend many of the institutions of society. Civil government is to be regarded as an ordinance of God for the terror and punishment of evil-doers, and a security and encouragement to them that do well. The punishment of the wicked, and the restraints of the ill-disposed, however imperfectly effected by this institution, are yet to be regarded as a general effect, indicating the moral intention of God, who ruleth in the earth. The same intention is also intimated to us in the universal impression of parental authority, although, like civil government, it is too often imperfectly administered.

A more sensible indication of the moral government of God we find in the sentiment which offences against society naturally excite in observers. It is not merely a sentiment of fear, which is excited by the evil-doer, but one of indignation and contempt, even when he has escaped the penalty of human laws. It does not destroy the proof which these sentiments furnish of a moral constitution, to say that they are the effect of education, or of a refined state of society; because, if the Author of our being has so constituted the nature and circumstances of all his creatures that these sentiments are always generated in the course of man's social existence, this fact is enough to entitle us to call it a moral provision, indicating the judicial government of God, by which he inflicts punishment on the offenders against society. Besides this retribution from society, there is a punishment provided for personal vices, in the consequences which follow them in the frame of the human body; and there is no excess which is not, closely, or remotely, pursued by its natural retribution, weakness, disease, and death.

But the most important witness of the moral and judicial government of God is, undoubtedly, to be found within the mind itself. When we speak of conscience, every man knows what we mean; for its tribunal is within him, and this vicegerent of the divine justice exercises a power from which it is impossible entirely to escape, though it is sometimes silenced, corrupted, or deceived. This it is, which makes cowards of the most abandoned in the hour of death, which flashes its light into the most secret retreats of the guilty, and breathes an unacknowledged horror over the prosperity of the wicked. This it is, which renders the face of nature horrible to the man who bears about with him the worm that never dies; this is the avenger, which waits only for a moment of solitude, or an interval of retirement, to make the proudest and most important of villains weary of life, and, if it find him never alone, pursues him even in his dreams, and terrifies him with visions of the night. It is a rewarder, also, as well as a punisher; an approver, as well as a condemner. It is regarded not merely as a strong indication of the divine government, but as constituting the most extensive and effectual provision which God has made for the administration of justice; and there is no man, who has ever fallen under its sentence, who will not confess that it is the minister, as well as the interpreter, of divine justice.

Has your conscience ever reproached you? Did it not then, at that very moment, lift a corner of the veil which is yet drawn over this scene of future judgment? Every public oath, every faltering perjury, every dying confession, every prayer for mercy, every face pale with falsehood, and every wild look of despair, is an appeal, which our reason acknowledges, to this future tribunal.

When Paul was reasoning "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled." The rising of the procurator from his seat was itself a proclamation, loud as the voice of the inspired apostle, that the doctrine, which he taught was no chimera. But, if the Roman governor chooses, let him refer these suggestions of his troubled mind to the class of superstitious delusions, and maintain that they do not demonstrate such a retribution as the apostle was preaching. Be it so, then; and let Felix take his seat again, and demand another proof; for conscience, though it makes us cowards, does not always make us believers. Let the trial, then, of the innocent proceed. Let the judge, who has the preacher in his power, proceed to pass his iniquitous sentence, and cut off, at once, the argument and the life of the apostle. Nay, more; let him retire now with his guards, and ask, Where is this judgment of which the prisoner prated so long? Now call in the spectators of this injustice, the sufferers under his administration; show the plunder which Felix has collected, the villages smoking under his rapacious edicts. Let them hear the cries of his innocent victims, and the loud appeals to Heaven, from every part of Judea, against the cruelty of the unprincipled procurator; and then ask them whether Paul's doctrine is true, and you will hear another answer.

It appears, then, whatever credit we may refuse to give to the language of our own consciences on this subject, we are ready to believe in a retribution to come, when we ourselves suffer injustice, or when we see, as well as feel, the inconveniences of the imperfect retribution of the present life. These are arguments which strike the most obtuse understandings; and many a man, who doubts of a doctrine

taught him by his conscience, will have no longer a doubt, when the same doctrine is presented to him by his sufferings, or by his passions.

Besides the reproaches of conscience, there are the pangs of mind attendant on particular evil passions, such as the pinings of envy, the heat of rage, the goadings of ambition, and the fears of avarice, all of which are indications of a moral constitution, and are avengers of the divine laws.

These proofs of a moral and judicial government are much more numerous than a superficial glance at society would lead any man to suppose. God has everywhere innumerable instruments at his disposal, and the methods, by which he may punish offenders here on earth, are various, far beyond our imagination; and let us never forget that the process may be going on in the mind, when it is yet utterly imperceptible to others. We should not be so much disposed to doubt the equity of the divine administration, and to regard this world as a scene where vice is often unpunished and virtue unrewarded, if we were not so much dazzled by external circumstances as to regard men's visible condition as the indication of their happiness. We wonder that the lightning does not blast the murderer, or the earth open and swallow up the blasphemer, and cry "Doth not God see?" when, if we will but think, we shall be satisfied that there is a secret, gradual, and certain process continually going on within, which is the natural retribution which God has appointed, and which is quite as decided an indication of a moral government, to those who will attend to it, as if the earth opened, or the thunderbolt fell. God, indeed, causes his sun to shine, and his rain to descend, on the just and on the unjust. He does

not give us a visible sign from heaven to resolve our perplexities; but, if we will look within, we shall find the sign we want.

The circumstances, we have now enumerated, are abundantly sufficient to prove the commencement of a moral and judicial government. Indeed, men do not, in general, deny it. They see the characters written on the wall, and it is only when interest or passion deceives them, that they fail to discern that there "is a God that judgeth in the earth," and that we are accountable to his government.

It may seem extraordinary, that we should have taken so much pains to show the commencement of a retribution here, as a preliminary to the proof of a retribution hereafter. Why not come, at once, to the arguments for a future life and judgment? But it ought to be considered, that it is only from the indications of a moral government here, that, exclusive of revelation, we can infer the probability of any retribution hereafter; it is from its commencement here, that we expect its continuance, and from its imperfect dispensation in this world, that we infer its completion and perfection in another.

We come, then, to our second head, where it is our object to prove, that, while there are so many circumstances to demonstrate the existence of a moral and judicial government in the world, there are certain facts which compel us to believe that its execution is here incomplete, and that the apparent inequalities will be rectified. From among these numerous inequalities and defects I will mention only one, which strikes me with peculiar force.

It is very easy to find reasons why virtue and piety should here be exposed to affliction. It not only tries, but it confirms, the force of a virtuous mind; and I have no

hesitation in saying that such a state as ours, where "there is one event alike to the righteous and to the wicked," is perfectly proper as a state of probation. Indeed, I know not how any great degree of virtue could exist, where there was no principle of religious faith in a retribution to come; and this could not and would not be, if temporal reward and punishment easily and equitably followed every degree of virtue and vice. But, though such a condition as our present state is undoubtedly calculated to form virtue, it is not a state so well calculated to reward it, or to punish vice. A state of probation, therefore, infallibly conducts us to a state of retribution.

The instance, which we were about to observe, as a strong indication of some future day of recompense, is this. There are numerous examples of good men suffering, on the very account of their piety and integrity, from the hands of the wicked. Now, how much soever such trials may exercise and improve the character of the sufferer, yet, exclusive of a life to come, such virtue not only seems not to meet with any adequate recompense, but does not appear to answer any purpose of wisdom and goodness, but to be punished with misery and destruction. Let it be admitted, that the sufferings of the good man have contributed to form his virtue; yet, if there be no future recompense, for what is it formed? To be destroyed? What! a harvest which has sprung from religion, the very root and principle of which is faith in God, and the hope of the life to come, and yet he, who doeth nothing in vain, hath formed such virtue in vain? Impossible! What we know and have seen of God will not allow us to believe this disappointment, or that those, who have fallen in the cause of virtue, have perished.

And, on the other hand, although, as we have shown before, the common degrees of vice find their retribution in the very constitution of human nature, and the course of Providence, yet we all know that the most hardened depravity is often the most easy. The greatest excesses are perpetrated by men who have lost the sense of shame, the fear of the laws, and the power of conscience. Surely, it cannot be, that the most thorough wickedness and the most eminent virtue are unprovided for in the administration of Providence. No reflecting man can believe this. The reward of those, who, by their uncommon fidelity to virtue, lose its ordinary advantages here, is not, then, lost, but only reserved.

We come now to the third division of our discourse, in which we intended to inquire what revelation says on this subject. We shall find that our Savior not only declares most explicitly a retribution to come, but also describes, in language suited to our finite comprehension, the mode in which it will be dispensed.

Indeed, it may seem almost superfluous, to quote from the Scriptures, in support of this doctrine; for upon the supposition of its truth all the instructions of our Savior and his apostles proceed. It was to bring it to light, that our Savior came into the world; it is on his death, and after-resurrection, that the strongest proof of our future life is raised; and, if we were called upon to give a summary of the gospel itself, I know not how it could be more compendiously stated than to say, that God will assuredly raise mankind to another life, and judge them according to their works, by Jesus Christ.

"I saw the dead," says the author of the book of Revelation, "small and great, stand before God; and the

books were opened, . . . and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." We have, in other places, a description of the future retribution in the forms of a judicial trial. How far this language is accommodated to our apprehensions, and derived from the forms of human tribunals, I presume not to say. He, however, will not have a less powerful and religious conception of this final account, who considers the book, in which our actions are recorded, as the mind of God, who sees, at a glance, all that is past, present, and to come; and that the division of the assembled universe to the right and to the left hand of the Judge is an expression of the distinction, the everlasting distinction, of the character and fate of the righteous and the wicked.

Let us consider a few more of the Scriptural delineations of this great event, remembering that whether they be understood literally, or not, is of no importance as to the reality of the fact, or the final issue of the event; for this much is certain, that, after death, there will be a judicial dispensation of rewards and punishments, and that every soul will be punished or rewarded, in whatever manner this may be, according to the good or the evil of his past life.

We have the most particular account of this day of judgment, given by our Savior himself, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. Another very intelligible description of the diversity of the rewards in the future life we have in the parable of the talents, which it is unnecessary to repeat. "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," says St Paul, "that every one may receive according to the things done in the body, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

For the day is coming, when "every eye shall see him" who was once on earth in suffering and humility, "despised and rejected of men;" but "when he shall appear" it shall be "in power and great glory;" for the Lord Jesus Christ "shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," those, who are alive, "shall be changed." The men, who shall call upon the rocks to shelter and the mountains to crush them, shall find the hills melt, and the foundations of the earth and all nature passing away like a scroll. "Watch, then, for ye know not the day, nor the hour." And however we may amuse ourselves with the thought, that these descriptions are accommodated to our gross and finite apprehensions, and that the literal language of the Scriptures will not be accomplished, of this fact we have all the assurance which the word of God can give us, that we must stand before him to "receive according to the things done in the body;" and then the wicked "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power," and the righteous shall enter to his joy, and live forever with Jesus Christ, in those mansions which he is preparing, and which were designed for them before the foundations of the world. "What I say unto you," then, in the words of our Lord, "I say unto all, Watch."

SERMON IV.

ROMANS II. 16.

IN THE DAY WHEN GOD SHALL JUDGE THE SECRETS OF MEN BY JESUS CHRIST, ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL.

OUR remarks, this afternoon, will relate to the great importance of the doctrine, which we considered this morning, of a future judgment, especially when it is viewed as a revelation of the secrets of all hearts.

When we reflect on the insufficiency of human laws, the vast sum of evil against which human legislation cannot provide, and the vast amount of good for which this world and its laws neither offer nor procure a recompense, we feel the importance of this doctrine of a judgment to come. When we are impatient at the long resounding groans of a land in bondage, and the inquiry is awakened, whether there is not "verily a reward for the righteous," let us consider that these are visible and public evils; but let us ask also, What shall be the retribution for all that hypocrisy which has enjoyed the favor of the world? What shall be the fate of those who have escaped the detection of all but their own consciences? Shall there be no account taken of those sinful inclinations which have never ripened into acts; of those wicked intentions which death or accident has frustrated; no retribution for ingratitude, treachery, and many other offences, of which neither the tribunal

of public opinion nor of public law is empowered to take cognizance?

Let us remember, also, that the laws of society are full of threats and penalties, but barren of rewards. They repress only the greatest crimes, and have no recompense for the greatest virtues. The world offers little encouragement for secret and unpretending goodness. Will there not, then, be a day of judgment, when it shall not be forgotten, who have secretly cast their mite, even all their living, into the treasury of human virtue and happiness?

The doctrine of a God, from whom nothing is hidden, and whose future judgment no creature can escape, is the very keystone of all the religions in the world. Take it away, and society becomes a desolate mass of ruins. While, then, we feel the value of this doctrine, as Christians and believers in God, what shall we think of those men, who, because they will not listen to the declarations of the Son of God, are yet willing, not only to despoil the believer of his hope, but see, without alarm, the foundations of human virtue broken up, and all the fidelity of promises, the force of oaths, and every hold which truth and virtue give us upon one another, left to the protection of an undefined and variable sense of honor, which is, to say the most, as perishable as the creatures whom it governs.

Thus much we have thought proper to repeat of the truth and importance of this doctrine, not because your faith in it is weak, but to prepare you for the consideration of that circumstance mentioned in the text, that God will, in that day, judge the secrets of men. Leave out but this single fact, that the secrets of all hearts shall then be revealed for the purpose of an equitable decision, and we leave out the most interesting and solemn of the circumstances which attend the scene of judgment.

What a day will that be which shall uncover the vast repository of human secrets! which shall lay bare the concealed crimes, the forgotten follies, and the unacknowledged motives of all the thoughtless actors in this busy world; the hidden purposes, wishes, fears, sorrows, and miseries of every creature that has ever been endowed with thought; the unregarded virtues, the ill-requited goodness, the undervalued worth of the children of heaven; in one word, which shall expose all that man has loved, all that he has dreaded, desired, or intended! The thought is too great for us to feel its force, and we must attend to it in parts, that, by enumerating, we may strengthen, rather than weaken, the force of the persuasion.

In that day shall God expose to view the many deliberate acts of hypocrisy, which have defied all human scrutiny. Then it will be seen what trusts were broken, what perjuries committed, and what equivocations were contrived by the deceitful dealer, to amass and keep his ill-gotten wealth; for his wealth will then no longer purchase him concealment and security. Then will the testimony of those, who have been taken off by secret violence, rise, in one dreadful reclamation, before the tribunal of eternal justice, and the groans of the injured and forgotten overwhelm the triumphant oppressor. Then will those dazzling and awe-commanding crimes, which have deluded the whole world, be laid bare to the indignation of the meanest sufferer from the oppression of the usurper. Then will many an object of mistaken admiration be exposed; the formal saint who believed nothing; the smiling calumniator who meant nothing; the unprofitable man who did nothing but purchase, by his professions, a temporary estimation. Then will the false witness and the corrupt judge, the incendiary

and the hidden criminal, whether small or great, stand revealed in the light of His countenance, whose "eyes are as a flame of fire," and whose understanding is infinite.

In that day will be disclosed the motives of those actions which have either received the applause of mankind, or been the subject of doubtful or timid condemnation. We shall see at what the patriot aspired, when he pushed himself into the notice of his countrymen; what the orator meant, when he poured out his honied words; and the preacher, when he awakened the hopes or fears of his auditory. Then the public declarations of those, who directed the affairs of the times in which they lived, and changed the fortunes of a nation, will be compared with their purposes and wishes, and the history of the world be read, not in the page of the eloquent historian, but in the records of eternal truth.

Then shall be known, also, wherefore the believer in Christianity has been ashamed to profess it, and how far the multitude of professors have acted up to their profession. Then it shall be discovered, how much of all the vast contributions of charity in the Christian world has been given "not grudgingly and of necessity," and how much, of all that has been bestowed on the relief of human misery, was truly given to relieve it.

In that day shall men be made known to themselves. To every individual his own character will be revealed which had been so often and so strangely misapprehended by himself. These discoveries, indeed, will be enough to cover the best of men with temporary confusion; for, when we come to understand the strange mixture of the motives which have governed us, the confusion of better and meaner principles, of zeal with passion, of humility with disappoint-

ed ambition, good conscience with spiritual pride, charity with the desire of estimation, love of truth with love of paradox, integrity with obstinacy, honor with base fear, correct sentiment with pride of opinion, love of peace with indolence and cowardice, and vanity, that most delusive of our motives, with all the rest, the best man will be astonished, and the worst be terrified, at the labyrinths of his own character.

But there is yet another and a deeper abyss of secrets to be broken up, and that is, of the before unknown and unacknowledged miseries of human kind. What a sound of groans issues at this opening of the depths of human sorrows! how many voices, hardly ever heard before, now utter their piercing cries before the assembled universe! Now shall be seen how much more impartial has been that moral retribution here on earth than we had ever imagined, and how unfounded have been our accusations of Providence for the apparent inequalities of its distribution. For then will be revealed the secret worm which has been gnawing, for years, in many a proud heart; and the unacknowledged fears which have pursued the wicked; and the dismay, which, in the hour of danger and of death, has overwhelmed many a secret sinner, will now betray itself to the observer.

Then will be revealed the many vexations which men have made for themselves by their evil and dissocial humors; the secret stings of impotent resentment, the long concealed gnawings of envy, the mortifications of vanity, and the wastings of discontent; the distressing doubts of many a profound philosopher and boasting freethinker, and the secret mournings of many an awakened conscience. Then will be shown the long roll of domestic vexations,

the fruits of evil humor, the secret sorrows of parents, the sleepless nights of those, who, with narrow means, have many to provide for, and the still more painful watchings of those who have had the care of great estates. Then will be revealed the unacknowledged pangs of jealousy, of hopeless love, the stings of falsehood,

> "And hard unkindness' altered eye
> That mocks the tear it forced to flow,"

the spectres which have haunted the sleep of the weak, and the steps of the guilty; and, last of all, the horrors which many, whom the world has envied, have met, when they entered on "the valley of the shadow of death."

Then, too, will be revealed innumerable purposes which have been formed, and left unexecuted. Then shall we know the plan of life, which the young man, cut off in the midst of his days, had drawn for himself; the dreams of the speculator; the visions of the scholar; the hopes of parents for their children; and the aspirations of those who had just begun to take a part in the contentions of the times. Then will be known how much evil has been intended which accident has frustrated, how much good has been promised of which the promise was forgotten, how much amendment resolved upon, but defeated by delay.

What a pitiable spectacle then will be presented of half honest confessions, unexecuted resolutions, and of sins *almost* forsaken! What a scene will open upon the recollection of every one of us, of expectations never answered, wishes never acknowledged, pursuits never fully approved, or faintly followed; and progress always intended, but never made!

But will all the disclosures of that tremendous day be of

this painful and melancholy character? I hope not, my hearers. When this assembly shall stand before the tribunal of Omniscient retribution, I hope we shall find there revealed some good deeds, and some good intentions, which were not before known, and which God will confirm by the records of his book of life. Let us hope that many a character will then be cleared up, which is now clouded by the suspicions of a censorious world, and that many will awake, and shake themselves from the dust, and put on their beautiful garments, because their warfare is accomplished, and their time of redemption is come. Then it shall be known, with what patience and humility many followers of our Master have waited for this day; and the secret alms, the drops of water given to the parched lips of the sufferer, the secret prayers put up for others, the secret sorrows of the righteous for those vices and miseries they could not prevent, in short, all that humble virtue, which was hardly known to the virtuous himself, will then be revealed, not to magnify the authors, but to vindicate the equitable providence of God, the eternal patron of truth and righteousness.

It is also one of the affecting circumstances of this scene of retribution, that the Lord Jesus Christ will remember what his friends and disciples will have forgotten; they will be insensible, or, rather, surprised, at the deeds of which he reminds them, and say, "When saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee drink; or naked, and clothed thee; or sick or in prison, and came unto thee?" Then shall the judge say unto them, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." What a scene of recompense is this! Can we hope, my hearers, that we shall then be reminded

of good deeds forgotten, and informed of virtues which we never suspected in ourselves? "Whosoever shall humble himself as a little child, the same shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Seeing, then, we know that there is such a day approaching, "what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness!" Surely, it ought, above all things, to encourage us in that virtue without which no other can exist, that great virtue of sincerity. What man can quietly allow himself in falsehood or equivocation, who knows that his idle words are now recorded, and will be remembered to his confusion; that his false promises will be proclaimed before the assembled universe, and all the treachery of his social intercourse laid bare? What a motive is it to the utmost simplicity and ingenuousness of character, that God is not, for a moment, deceived by that equivocation which marks the conduct of many men who have their points to gain, but who are not otherwise absolutely corrupt!

Again; the thought of a judgment to come ought to be a restraint upon every excess of sensuality, every tendency to profligacy. Look up, O sinner, in the heat of thy passion, when the sound of mirth has lulled, and the tide of pleasure begun to ebb, — for thou hast known such moments, — look up, and see the writing on the wall: "This night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall these things be?" And where shalt thou be? Wilt thou go and present thyself in the robes of thy guilt before the tribunal of thy God?

Let the thought of this scene of final trial lessen our pride and vanity; for at that bar men will appear as they are, and not as we have thought them to be. What then?

Will the petty distinctions, of which we are so ambitious, the beauty, the fine form, the grace of action, the wealth, the splendor, the whole apparatus of human vanity, disappear, and leave not a fragment for our complacent regard to fix upon in that great day? What is it, then, my hearers, that so many of us are contending for, praying, sinning, living, and dying for? "The fashion of this world passeth away."

The thought of this day, when the secret sorrows of so many hearts will be revealed, should guard us against all uncharitableness; "for with what judgment we judge shall we be judged, and with what measure we mete shall it be measured to us again." Where is the man who would not shrink to have his own heart laid bare before the very meanest creature whom he has regarded uncharitably? My friends, in that day we shall indeed stand in need of favor; we shall not disdain the complacent regard of the most humble of our fellow-creatures.

If these considerations teach us charity, how much more should they teach us forgiveness! Have we ever thought how much we have to be forgiven; and can we, with a debt of a thousand talents unpaid, oppress a poor creature who has besought us to have patience with him till he could discharge his hundred pence?

Lastly, the belief of this judgment to come should not only fortify our minds against unjust accusations, and unexpected misfortunes, but it should also inspire us with the utmost submission and contentment under the changing and unequal circumstances of the present life. Especially let those take comfort, whose fond hopes in others have been blasted. This maze of events, so dark and unaccountable to human apprehension, will then be cleared

up to the eye of faith and pity. Meanwhile, let us "not be deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth" here "that shall he also reap" hereafter. "Though the righteous be prevented by death, yet shall he be at rest," and "the sinner, though an hundred years old, shall be accused." Be not governed by present appearances; judge nothing before the time; wait the issue of this scene of probation; for "it is appointed unto men once to die, and, after this, the judgment."

SERMON V.

1 CORINTHIANS XIII. 10.

WHEN THAT WHICH IS PERFECT IS COME, THEN THAT WHICH IS IN PART SHALL BE DONE AWAY.

THE contemplation of the life to come is the frequent employment of every Christian whose faith in the gospel is firm and practical. The discipline of Christianity is rendered effectual by presenting to us motives drawn from another life, adapted to overcome the temptations, and to support the trials of the present.

A subject, then, which must naturally present itself so often to the minds of the Christian, ought to be as distinctly and justly comprehended as the information of Scripture, and the suggestions of reason, will allow. It was, no doubt, intended by the Author of our salvation, to leave his followers the most satisfactory assurance of a future life; but he has furnished us with no more definite ideas of the nature and mode of that life than are necessary for the practical influence of the general truth. Still, it is permitted us to put together the scattered intimations contained in Scripture, and compare them with the suggestions of reason and the analogies to which we can have access, and thus to form some faint notions of the future world. Though the remarks, which will now be offered to you, may fall short of the indistinct and exalted conceptions you may have formed

of the future state of existence, they will not, I hope, be thought contradictory to the most obvious meaning of the Scripture language, which is highly figurative, or to the suggestions of the soundest reason.

It is, indeed, impossible for us to conceive of a future life, except according to the ideas which we have derived from our present condition, or to express them in any other words than such as convey sensible images. My object in this discourse will be, not so much to give definite conceptions of scenes which we can know only after our departure from this life, as to guard against some erroneous imaginations which may render our belief in a future existence less efficacious than it ought to be.

In the first place, then, wherever we may exist hereafter, we shall not cease to be men. Our human nature will not be changed into the angelic, nor shall we constitute a different order of beings. It is true, our Lord has said, that they, who are "worthy to attain that world, neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God." This change, however, in our condition, results, as we may well suppose, from our freedom from these material bodies; and the language of our Savior is rather a precaution against the sensual fancies of those who would transfer to heaven the delights of a terrestrial paradise than any specific description of the future world. We shall not, however, be transformed into a superior order of spirits, as angels are imagined to be; for, if this were to be the case, there would be no propriety in saying that we should be like them.

What, then! are not all our imperfections to be removed? Are we to continue to be frail, limited, finite creatures? Must we still be men? I hope there is no presumption in

replying that we must. For is man, the work of God, the image of the supreme intellect, so poor and worthless a creature that his nature is not worthy of being continued? Let us learn to think more worthily of our destination. If man has been granted so exalted a place in the infinite works of the Creator, he is, no doubt, worthy of being continued in that exalted station. We find nothing, in what we are allowed to observe in the works of God, which indicates that any chasm is to be left in the scale of being, by the transformation of one rank into another. The plan of God appears to be the progressive improvement of the individuals of a species, not the gratification of that vain ambition by which "men would be angels, angels would be gods."

Not only may we conclude that our human nature will be preserved, but that every individual, also, will retain his own individual nature, or that which distinguishes him from every other person. Every man has his peculiar capacity, or disposition, which he brought with him into the world, or which he has acquired by diligent cultivation; and we have no reason to imagine that these discriminating properties of his character are to be abolished by the dissolution of his body. In the future world, as in the present, a harmonious whole will, no doubt, be composed by every one's filling his proper place; by every description of mind finding its proper rank, employment, and happiness; but we have reason to expect a far more perfect state than the present, because composed of better spirits. There, no doubt, as well as here, the degrees of happiness will be as various as the diversities of attainments in knowledge and virtue. It will be enough to secure the perfection of that state, that every one may strive for higher degrees of virtue

and happiness without envy; enjoy what is peculiar to himself, and proceed towards the highest points of human perfection, without interruption from the cares, the passions, and the sorrows of this life.

But there will also be an intimate connexion between the future life and the present. The future will, in fact, be the continuation of the present. It will be the further evolution of the energies of this; the fruit of what is now sown; the maturity of what is now just appearing; the consummation of what is now imperfect.

It is of the utmost importance, that we should keep in view the close and indissoluble connexion of these two stages of our existence. It is this alone which gives any rational efficacy to the grand doctrine drawn from our immortality, that anything done here by us has a bearing upon futurity. It would be of no moral consequence to tell mankind that they would be hereafter newly created, to enter another course of being, which had no reference to the present, and was in no degree dependent on it. No! the solemnity, the unspeakable efficacy, of the doctrine of a future life, results from this, — that the two existences are so intimately and inseparably joined, that the one determines the other. Death is but the lifting up of the curtain which divides them, and the most trifling action or neglect has the same influence upon the character and condition of man after death that it has in this life.

How truly interesting is this thought! If no man can enter hereafter on any joys for which he has no taste, or employments for which he is not here qualified; if the change, in fact, into another life, furnishes us with nothing which we do not carry out of this, gives us no merits which we do not now possess, and supplies none of our wilful

neglects or losses, but God strictly renders to every man according to his deeds, can I utter a truth more alarming to the slothful, the insensible, or the hardened sinner? And this it is, my friends, which gives such dignity and sublimity to the virtue of a Christian, that he is thinking and acting for eternity; not for a posthumous applause in the mouths of a perishable race of mortal men, but for the eternal existence on which he will personally enter, and for the approbation of that Being who is from everlasting to everlasting.

What has now been said of the intimate connexion of these two states of existence, and the fact, that it will be the same unaltered nature which is to exist here and hereafter, is illustrated and confirmed by the Christian doctrine of a resurrection. The language of Scripture leads us to expect that a spiritual body will succeed to the present animal structure. This, surely, would not be provided, if it were not absolutely essential to the nature and continued personality of man, that he should have some kind of organization. If so, then we may suppose that hereafter we shall continue to receive ideas, to exercise memory, and to perform other mental acts, by some organs to supply the place of the present, however more they may be refined, or more exquisitely developed, than the present.

I should not venture to introduce such remarks as these, so evidently beyond a living man's observation, if we were not, in some measure, countenanced by the language of St. Paul, in that remarkable chapter of Corinthians, where the apostle has so repeatedly spoken of the spiritual body which is to succeed this corruptible frame, and even illustrated it by a comparison which is full of significancy: "But some will say, How can the dead rise, and with what body

will they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." What is it that dies? Is it not the covering of the grain, while the germ subsists, unfolds, and fructifies?

Again; we have every reason to believe that the next life will be, like the present, progressive; and not only so, but that the degree of knowledge and virtue, which we have here attained, will be the point from which we begin our progress hereafter, and determine the place we shall there occupy. The successive moments of our terrestrial existence have been indissolubly connected one with the other. Everything in the works of God proceeds by regular progress and gradation. Death breaks not the chain, but is only the link connecting the present and the future life. The degree of virtue acquired here, then, by any individual, will determine the degree of happiness or glory to be enjoyed hereafter. The language of revelation expressly establishes this opinion of the diversities and degrees of future happiness and glory. "To whom much is given of him much will be required;" and "to him who hath" here "will be given" hereafter. "God will reward every man according to his works." Hear the language of the Apostle: "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also will it be at the resurrection of the dead."

And not only will the happiness of the future world be enjoyed in innumerable stages and degrees, but the progress from this point will be perpetual and infinite. One degree of excellence leads, of itself, to another; and, as the distance between created beings and the uncreated God, between finite and infinite, is essentially and necessarily infinite, so

may we be continually tending towards supreme perfection without ever reaching it. Is not this more rational than that the perfection, of which we are ultimately capable, should burst upon us at once? We are led to the most unpleasant foreboding, from the appearance of premature capacity on earth; we look upon it as something which violates the order and beauty of God's arrangement; and shall we imagine that heaven will be less harmonious than earth, or that the orderly progress towards perfection will be disturbed by the intervention of death?

Many pious and philosophical minds have indulged themselves in imagining the progress of the renovated man through the future stages of existence. With the whole universe before them, they have followed the emancipated spirit in boundless excursions from planet to planet, sun to sun, and system to system, through the immensity of space. These contemplations are not to be hastily condemned. They serve to raise the soul above the petty and contracting cares of the present life, and to make us feel more of the sublimity and grandeur of the expectations which Christianity awakens. The future state of the just, we have every reason to believe, will be a state of great activity, and constant advancement in knowledge. But let us not confine our notions of our progress in another life to the mere enlargement of our knowledge. We may hope that we shall there find goodness more in honor than knowledge, or, rather, that the one will be made inseparable from the other. If we may venture to speak of those pursuits which will be most interesting hereafter to virtuous and pious minds, they will not be the natural history of other worlds, or the astronomy of other systems, so much as the knowledge which will be communicated to us of the his-

tory of God's providence; the reasons of many of those events which have now perplexed our philosophy and eluded our search; the light which will be thrown upon God's moral government of the world. How interesting, too, will be the mere knowledge of ourselves, of our past progress, of the causes which have interrupted, the trials, the privations, and the calamities, which have contributed so mysteriously to the formation of our present character! The study of man, indeed, in connexion with God, will be enough for a long life hereafter, and the knowledge of himself the most fruitful of interest to every individual. "Now we see through a glass darkly." This world and our own characters are full of enigmas. "Then we shall know even as we are known;" and it will be no small accession of knowledge, to know ourselves even as we are known by others.

As every consideration leads us to believe that the future life will be a social state, therefore love, kind affections, and good-will are to constitute the real reward, the true felicity of heaven. We say that the future state will be a social state. Are we not authorized to say this, by that language of Scripture, which speaks of the assemblies of just men made perfect, and of the many mansions which Jesus has prepared for his followers, that where he is they may be also? Besides, if our future happiness, as we before observed, is to be the happiness of men, we know of none, except that which depends on the mere gratification of the senses, which may not be communicated to others, and which is not increased by this participation. We are to enter also a state of retribution; and it is difficult to imagine how that retribution can be accomplished, if all the relations with those among whom we have lived, giv-

ing and receiving good or evil, are to be at once abolished. It is true, that the social character of the future state does not necessarily suppose that former intimacies will be renewed. But, if there is to be a junction of virtuous persons, it seems hardly consistent with all the analogies of nature, that those should be unknown to each other, who seem best formed for the promotion of each other's happiness; or that, where two minds have been subject to the same discipline, formed the same habits, and drawn their happiness from the same sources, they should, in another state, be cut off from an enjoyment so pure, merely in consequence of their transition to another region.

I know, that, in consequence of the prodigious change effected by the dissolution of these bodies, it may be seriously doubted, whether we shall have the same visible marks of mutual recognition, which now make us known to each other. But there are beings, we may hope, who could not fail of finding each other again, by those eternal and ineffaceable characters of mind and sympathies of soul, which bound them together here more strongly than all the ties of consanguinity, or the strength of long intimacy.

Here, then, enters the delightful thought of love purified, enlarged, and invigorated. Here we have a glimpse of self-annihilation, and of that infinite benevolence which now exists only in God. It seems, indeed, that here on earth we feel very little love which is not, in some measure, supported by the relation of the object to ourselves as individuals. We see and feel ourselves in all that is about us. Very wonderful will be the change, then, if we can know, in all its purity and power, that affection which is satisfied with the sole pleasure of making others happy.

We may even then know what it is to love God himself, not as we love him here, so feebly, so faintly, so inadequately, but supremely and unalterably, without fear, or doubt, or error.

But it is impossible for us to penetrate to the extent of moral perfection, which may be attained, when the senses shall no longer degrade our affections, or the imagination corrupt our hearts; when the consciousness of the divine approbation, unmingled and undisturbed, shall fill our souls, and nothing be wanting to insure our endless happiness, but the pure and holy perception of the happiness of others.

All these considerations, which confirm our expectations of a state of social existence, lead us to regard the future as an active life. Far be it from me, to diminish the comfortable hope of that "rest which remaineth to the people of God;" or to deprive the patient, care-worn, and exhausted Christian of the tranquillizing prospect of repose in the presence of his God. But rest is not torpor, nor repose inactivity. Nothing in nature, or in Scripture, authorizes the notion, which too commonly prevails, that the good will be in a state of pure rest, or passive enjoyment, absorbed in the contemplation of God, and yielding to impressions of pleasure independent of all activity of body or mind. This cannot be the heaven which God, the eternally active, powerful, and vivifying Spirit, has provided for creatures made in his image, and whose perfection consists in the active imitation of his benevolence. Let the thought, that we are to be continually employed, and employed in the diffusion of that good at which God aims, enter into our anticipations of futurity. All there will be exercise; exercise of our faculties in the acquisition of knowledge, of our affec-

tions in the love of God's creatures, of our powers in the communication of his benefits. We are here most happy when most employed; and can opportunities, or objects, or means, or inclination be hereafter wanting in the immense range of God's creation?

Who, then, is the man that is fit for heaven? The selfish, solitary, and indolent speculatist; the griping, hoarding, narrow-minded child of earth; the vain, proud, self-important man of consequence? No! the heaven, which we describe, can be no place for them. The proper candidates for heaven are the men who diligently fulfil the duties of their station; who live most for others; and, with unremitted and unwearied care, exert their talents in laboring to correct their own dispositions, and to promote the good of others.

There is another circumstance in the future life of the Christian, which it would be inexcusable to omit, and that is the presence of Christ. He has gone to prepare a place for his followers, that where he is they may be also. It is on these promises, that the Christian's hope has been supported. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." What though all his other expectations of the specific nature or employments of his future condition should be false, yet it is enough for the Christian to know that hereafter Christ will be his companion, and his friend. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God;" "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

Who, then, are to be partakers of this life to come? The world is full of rational beings, capable of forming the conception and cherishing the hope of such an exist-

ence. But can we expect to find hereafter, in a more exalted state, all the degraded creatures who live now on the mercy and forbearance of God? Neither Scripture nor reason will allow this hope. There are those who will "sleep in the dust of the earth," and "awake to everlasting contempt." The society of heaven cannot be composed, like the present, of the foolish and the wise, the virtuous and the profligate, the worthless and the excellent. Into the world we have been describing entereth nothing "that defileth or that maketh a lie." And I heard a voice out of heaven saying, "It is done. I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the end. He, that overcometh, shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the second death."

How glorious are the prospects opened to the eye of faith and virtue! Separated from the wicked, to dwell only with the wise and virtuous, to act with them, to learn with them, and to worship, with them, the everlasting Father; to be occupied forever in the general good of God's creatures, and to proceed from good to better, from glory to glory!

SERMON VI.

JOHN XVIII. 36.

JESUS ANSWERED; MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD.

WHEN our Savior was brought before Pilate, and maliciously charged by the Jews with affecting regal power, Pilate asks, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" and receives the reply in the text, — "My kingdom is not of this world."

In the opinion of the Roman judge it appears to have been explicit and satisfactory; for he went out, without delay, to our Savior's accusers, to protest, a second time, that he found no fault in him. This reply, which, at the time, seems to have produced in the mind of Pilate a conviction of the innocence of our Savior's designs, and of the intellectual nature of that influence and authority which he had endeavored to establish, stands yet on record, to refute those idle accusations of disingenuous men, by which they have represented the religion of Jesus as a contrivance of ambitious impostors, and the spiritual engine of political power. It stands yet on record, to reproach the weakness of Pilate, who, after such a declaration, could yield up the Son of God as a dangerous and seditious enemy of Cæsar, and also as a reproach to the pride and spiritual despotism of many sectaries and princes in the history of the church. It stands yet on record, to encourage and

console the real church of Christ in times of affliction, persecution, apostasy, and decay; for, whether our religion enjoy the favor, or endure the hostility, of the civil powers; whether the kingdoms, which call themselves Christian, are swept away, or extended; whether this globe itself endure, or vanish from the systems of the world, the Prince of Peace is not dethroned, nor his holy dominion destroyed, nor his realm invaded, nor the peace and privileges of his subjects disturbed.

Every religion, which the world, before the coming of Christ, had known, was, more or less, incorporated with established governments. The system of Paganism was altogether civil; the augurs could suspend any proceeding of state, and, at last, the character of priest was invariably united with that of emperor. The religion of Moses, too, was intimately incorporated with his civil polity; and, however the circumcision of the heart only might be recommended by a Christian apostle, no one could ever belong to the Jewish nation, who did not, first, by this outward rite of religious initiation, belong to the Jewish church.

But the religion of Jesus, thanks be to God! was linked with the fortunes of no nation, and wrought into the forms of no government. It interferes with none of the distinctions of political society. It is a religion circumscribed by no natural boundaries, suited to every climate, country, and state of improvement, and adapted to all ages of the world. It has no peculiar exemptions, nor peculiar privileges, for any sex, age, or order of society. In one word, it was designed to be universal and immortal. It has its rudiments only in this world, but its perfection hereafter. The subjects of Christ's kingdom here are a small and distant colony of a mighty empire, placed where their loyalty

is in a state of perpetual probation, to be transplanted successively to the parent country, and to dwell under the more immediate influence of the Prince of Peace, in heaven, the seat of his immediate presence.

Jesus, in his reply to Pilate, who had asked him whether he were a king, adds, in confirmation of the unwarlike nature of the kingdom which he came to establish, "If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have fought, they would not have permitted me to be delivered up to the Jews." Our Savior does not offer this as the only, or the strongest, proof of the spiritual nature of his government, but as one which was evidently suggested by his actual circumstances.

Our Savior's meaning, in the words of our text, undoubtedly, was, that he was, indeed, a king, but that the sway, he should exercise, would be marked by none of the insignia of temporal power, that it would consist in the spiritual influence of his gospel, and the acknowledgment of his authority in the hearts of all his faithful followers, through a long succession of ages; that this world was not the limit of his reign, but that his kingdom would be continued and consummated hereafter.

It shall be our present object, to show you how little the kingdom of Christ resembles, and how little it is connected with, the kingdoms of the world, in its origin, its establishment, its nature, and its duration.

First, then, in its origin. We discern in reality what was so often absurdly claimed by the founders of states, we discern a celestial origin. With what retired and peaceful auguries is it ushered in! In that day, when "the God of heaven" began to "set up a kingdom which should never be destroyed," the world, we are told,was reposing in universal

peace. This spiritual kingdom is introduced, and the states and empires of the earth are undisturbed. In a humble village of Judea, an inconsiderable province of the empire, angels, in the stillness of the midnight air, announce to shepherds the birth of the Prince of Peace, by the song of peace and good-will to men. At the age of thirty years, this Son of God enters publicly, but quietly, and without ostentation, on the business of his mission. At first he is employed in teaching humility to a few ambitious disciples; he is employed in establishing the influence of the most unaspiring religion in hearts the most adverse to its reception; and thus, my friends, is God's minister employed upon earth, during a laborious life. We observe in Jesus no solicitude to swell the number of his adherents by flattering promises, and no care to retain those who, from admiration or curiosity, called themselves his disciples. A ruler comes and falls down before him, professing himself his follower. Our Savior, instead of eagerly embracing him as a valuable acquisition to his cause, proposes a severe test of his sincerity: "Sell all that thou hast, and give it to the poor, . . . and then come and follow me." The disappointed ruler departs in sorrow, "for," says the evangelist, "he had great possessions." These, however, to a teacher of worldly views, would have been his highest recommendation.

Let us, in the scond place, endeavor to trace the establishment of this kingdom in the world after the death of its founder. You will naturally ask, What provision is made for its continuance and extension? Without doubt, the world would previously suppose that Jesus, like Mahomet, had appointed his successors, given them minute political instructions, and assigned to them their different departments. Perhaps he had directed them to retire, as they

did, from Jerusalem, to avoid the gathering storm, to collect, in silence, their scattered adherents, to wait in secret the increase of their numbers and their strength, and to return, in due time, to avenge the murder of their Master, and to plant the cross on the ruins of the temple. Not a word of all this. Their Lord is crucified, and the disciples are dispersed. The interests of this desperate cause are left, my friends, to the efforts of the men who had fled in panic from Jerusalem. They are left to the untutored eloquence of Peter, that timid disciple who had denied his Master; to the persuasive and affectionate simplicity of the young John; to the fortitude, the zeal, the learning of Paul, who was now, perhaps, sitting at the feet of Gamaliel, smiling at the unsuccessful ministry of Jesus. And yet these are the means by which the kingdom, "that is not of this world," is to be extended. These are the peaceful arms which are to beat down the strong-holds of vice, and spread the triumphs of the cross, and vanquish the lusts and passions and prejudices of an enlightened age.

Observe the circumstances which attended the progress of this kingdom, and you will see that it neither interfered nor was connected with the kingdoms of the world. It threatens not the established power of a single subordinate officer, throughout the Roman empire. It proposes no change in men's civil relations. It may coëxist with any form of government, and any station of society. The kingdom of heaven is capacious enough to include the slave chained to his task, and the emperor seated on his throne. It requires not the former to break his fetters, nor the latter to cast away his crown. While it was winning its way through the wide extent of the Roman empire, though the workmen, "who made silver shrines for Diana," might have

had some cause for their clamor, Cæsar himself had no reason to be alarmed, and no excuse to persecute. Into this kingdom enters Onesimus, the servant of Philemon, and into this kingdom how gladly would have been received the king Agrippa, almost persuaded to be a Christian! Upon this subject of the interference of Christianity with men's civil relations, we need only quote the words of the Apostle: "Is any man called being circumcised, let him not become uncircumcised.... Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing," slavery is nothing, and freedom is nothing, "but the keeping of the commandments of God."

Further; as the kingdom of Christ, in its establishment, gave no offence to the reigning powers, so it received support from none, while it gave support to all. While it was making men fit to leave the world, it fitted them also to live peaceably in it; and a good subject of Christ was also a good subject of any government on earth. It asked only for tolerance, and it gave peace in return. Yet it encountered the most cruel opposition. Even the benevolent and enlightened Trajan could persecute and burn a Christian without remorse. And what, think you, my friends, would have been the fate of a temporal power, attempting to establish itself, at such a moment, in the centre of the Roman empire? Nay, what, think you, would have been the fate of Christianity itself, if it had then constised, like the religion of many of its professors at the present day, in its public institutions, in the number of its churches, in the reception of the sacrament, in the baptism of children, in the hearing of sermons, and in the peace and splendor and quiet of a church? Thank God! there were subjects of Jesus then existing, to whom the honor and love of their Master were dearer than life. Thank God! there were

hearts beating with the influence of the gospel, though its rites were secret, and its assemblies small and despised. Hence, when the temples of Christ were burning, the sanctuary in the heart was untouched; when his professors were led to the stake, his subjects were multiplied, and Christianity flourished, though its rites were suppressed, and trodden under the foot of power.

But, my friends, this picture of poverty and persecution is soon to be reversed. This kingdom, which was not of the world, is soon to be united in its forms to the kingdoms of the civil world. Its professors rise to dignities in the empire; the emperor himself adopts it to strengthen his throne; the ministers of the gospel aspire to worldly dominion, and endeavor thus to extend, by the same victory, the borders of the empire and the limits of the church. All is security and wealth and pomp and power without. The empire is Christianized, but yet Christ has hardly gained a subject. Amid all this splendor, the meek spirit of the gospel is lost and overwhelmed; and, after this professed union of the religion of Jesus with the establishments of the world, corruptions, divisions, superstition, and ecclesiastical dominion, more to be dreaded than the hordes of northern barbarians, which overswept the empire, desolated the church; and they have transmitted their deadly influence to these remote ages. Truly, if this work had not been originally of God, it would long since have been destroyed by the very encouragement its profession has received.

We have thus seen that our Lord's kingdom was not of the world in its origin; that it sought no aid from the world in its establishment; that it interfered not with the kingdoms of the world in its extension; and that it receives

no real support from a union with the powers of the world in its interests.

Consider, in the third place, the subjects of this kingdom, and its spiritual nature will more clearly appear. Do not look for them, my friends, in that long roll of Christian emperors, beginning with the reign of Constantine. You may traverse the galleries of the imperial palace, and pass through the retinue of courtiers, and, I fear, you will hardly meet a disciple of the humble Nazarene. Do not look for them in the pompous martyrology of persecuting saints, who swell the calendar of the Romish church. I am compelled to say, too, that you must not look for them among those dignitaries who have lorded it over God's heritage, or among those barefooted and bareheaded impostors, who have concealed a vain and aspiring temper under the cloak of pretended mortification. I do not deny that a humble and holy spirit may reside under the purple and the ermine, while a proud heart may beat under haircloth and rags; yet, to find the subjects of Jesus, we must often descend to mean abodes, and often penetrate the recesses of domestic life, where we most often find the humble, the pure, the just, and pious, of whom the world has too often been unworthy.

These are they who have passed through great tribulation; men who have attained an enviable superiority to the pleasures, the pains, the honors, the riches, and the poverty, which surround them. No man can claim the privilege of this government, who has not subdued his passions to the authority of Christ. He seeks no doubting characters, who wish to be indulged in a partial attachment, who are ready to give up one vice, if they may be allowed to retain another, but who revolt at the first bribe which

the world offers. Especially does Christ disclaim those subjects who have taken his name because his religion is popular, and who hope to reap the advantages which may be connected with a profession of his doctrines. The rewards of his kingdom are intellectual and heavenly. They are not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world. The records of Christianity are humble; and this is an inconceivable consolation to the follower of Jesus, when he mourns over the degeneracy of some and the insensibility of others, that millions will appear in the rolls of future renown, whose names have never been seen in the page of history, and never reached the ear of any but the almighty Judge of the secrets of the heart of man.

It is time to close with a few reflections. If such, then, be the spiritual nature of the kingdom of Christ, we infer,—

First, that this kingdom will remain, when all the states and empires of the world shall have passed down the stream of time, far out of the reach of human recollection. How has the map of the world been changed, since the introduction of the religion of Jesus! There is not one of its old divisions to be traced. Where now is that cruel Jewish Sanhedrim which crucified the Lord of Life? Where is that proud Hebrew commonwealth, which saw with such malice the rising kingdom, and strove in vain to crush the infant church? Nay, where now is that famous Roman empire, composed of so many mighty nations, in the midst of which Christianity sprung up, like a tender shoot in a forest of lofty and aged trees, which have since decayed and fallen around it, and left it tall, spreading, and vigorous? Where now is that long train of persecut-

ing emperors, who wasted their resources in exterminating the humble subjects of this kingdom? And not only so, where now are the empires with which it was incorporated, and which lent it their support? They have fallen. But Christianity has not fallen. "Fear not," then, "little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you a kingdom" which cannot be destroyed.

Again; we may infer from this subject what the religion of Christ truly consists in. You, who understand by it the assumption of a peculiar name, tell us, where was Christianity, before its followers "were called Christians first in Antioch"? Is it the entrance upon a peculiar profession? Where was it, when it was not permitted to show itself in public? Does it consist in the reception of the elements, or in baptism? There have been periods, when these rites have been impracticable. Perhaps you imagine it to consist in the establishment of churches, of public worship, or of an order of ministers. Alas! it is too certain, that you may have been born and have lived in Christendom; you may have been baptized in infancy, in manhood, or in both; you may have communicated with the purest church on earth; you may have worn the threshold of the sanctuary with your footsteps; you may have borne the vessels of the altar, and entered the desk of instruction, without having entered the kingdom of Christ. Think you the possession of the privileges of the gospel is obedience to the gospel? or that the being decorated with the insignia of the empire will give you admittance to the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? No. For, "when once the master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the door," though many "standing without will begin to knock at the door and say, 'Lord, Lord, open unto us,' he

will answer, 'I know you not whence ye are.' Then will they begin to say, 'We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.' But he will say, I tell you again, 'I know you not whence ye are. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.'" For there will come from the east and the west, from the north and from the south, many who will sit at the table in the kingdom of God, and, behold, these are cast out.

Lastly; we may infer, from the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, the proper means of extending it. On this subject the most dreadful mistakes have prevailed in different ages, and among the best of men; mistakes which, at the present day, fill us with astonishment and shame. Nations have been Christianized, as it has been termed, at the point of the sword; and Jesus was supposed to have gained a disciple, when a Christian prince only gained another subject. But, though, by the grace of God, most of us now understand that a kingdom, which is not of this world, is not to be extended by the force of arms, but only by the force of moral motives, and the pacific introduction of religious teaching, yet even our zeal is now imperfectly directed. Our families, my friends, our children, our dependents, should be our first care. I cannot estimate very highly the wisdom or the sincerity of that man who promotes missions to the ends of the earth, while those, who are immediately under his eye, are ignorant of "the first principles of the oracles of God." The first victory, which the gospel gains, should be over our own hearts. Till this is achieved, it is weak and absurd for us to rejoice in the triumphs of the cross at the extremities of the earth.

"My kingdom is not of this world," saith our Savior.

But are we not of this world? And, when we are summoned, as we soon must be, to leave it, shall we not feel as if we were quitting, in exile, a land, where all our pleasures and hopes have centred? God grant that we may so understand the declaration in the text that heaven may prove our native soil, the abode of our friends, our parent country, and an abundant and welcome entrance be there administered to us in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

SERMON VII.

ROMANS XIV. 17.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NOT MEAT AND DRINK; BUT RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND PEACE, AND JOY IN THE HOLY GHOST.

IN these words are described, with much truth and conciseness, the nature and the effect of religion. It consists in the practice of righteousness, and it is accompanied with a spirit of peace and joy, resulting from an habitual confidence in God, the Author of all moral and religious happiness. The last clause, "joy in the holy ghost," admits of various interpretations. It may signify that satisfaction which the Christians in the apostolic age derived from the possession of the extraordinary gifts of the spirit; or, it may be opposed here to that dissocial disposition, which disturbed the intercourse between Jew and Gentile, on the subject of the use of meats, mentioned in the preceding verse. It is otherwise rendered, "joy in a holy spirit," or a pure and benevolent state of the affections. But I am willing to understand by it that contented and joyful state of mind, which belongs to a man of real devotion, who possesses "confidence toward God," and that filial spirit which makes duty easy, afflictions light, death harmless, futurity promising, and the whole course of the Christian life cheerful, active, and full of expectation.

"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink." It does

not consist, as those imagined to whom the apostle wrote, in abstaining from the use of certain kinds of food, or in the liberty of using them. This is only one instance, which stands, however, as a specimen of the mistakes that prevail with regard to the general nature of religion; mistakes, which are entirely consistent with the most scrupulous conscience, with the most animated zeal, with any form of worship, or any profession of doctrine.

The misapprehension of the nature of religion itself will form the subject of the first division of this discourse.

Let it be premised, however, that this is a question entirely different from the inquiry, What are the true doctrines of Christianity? or, What is fundamental in the belief of every man who assumes the name of Christian? It is true, that false notions of the nature of religion may be grounded on the supposition, or supported by the persuasion, of the truth or importance of particular tenets; but, however closely mistakes in practice, or imperfections of temper, may be connected with false articles of belief, error in our notions of particular doctrines is entirely distinct from our misconception of the nature and design of religion itself. This is primary and antecedent, and must be corrected, not merely by correcting particular tenets, but by more comprehensive views of religion in general.

The most exact conceptions may be formed, and the most perfect delineations may be made, of the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, without conveying to a mind, which will not reflect, the peculiar characteristics of a religious spirit. Just notions of what religion is must be collected rather from the general spirit of the gospel history, and a study of the character of God, and of man in his relation to his Maker, than from any precise definitions of

particular truths. Yet, notwithstanding all the variety of opinions existing in the Christian world, resulting from the ignorance or the passions of man, it is a most consoling thought, that the doctrines, which Christians acknowledge in common, are a sufficient foundation for real religion, and will effect, with the blessing of God's grace, the sanctification and happiness of every man who is previously furnished with just notions of the nature of this most precious gift.

Among the mistakes as to the nature of religion is one by which that is taken for religion, which may, perhaps, with greater propriety, be termed a complete absence, in the character, of everything essential to religion. This mistake discovers itself in that way of talking, which makes religion consist in good dispositions to virtue, in amiable instincts, in a certain decorum and inoffensiveness of conduct, which no violent passions interrupt. Of this character are most of those Christians who pass in the world unnoted for offences against the supposed laws of God and man. It is true, such persons are rather denominated good than religious men, because it is too often notorious to the observer, that the idea of God has hardly entered their minds, and exerts no influence whatever on their amiable dispositions. Such men may be said to act from anything, rather than from a principle of religion. They are so happy as to possess dispositions favorable to virtue, and a certain inoffensiveness of character, which is agreeable to the selfish indolence of mankind. But, though a principle of conscience may never have governed, nor any intelligent spirit of benevolence have animated their conduct, though they have lived without God in the world, and have really been free from vice only in consequence of the favor of circumstances, they are falsely

set down as examples of what Christianity is designed to form. Of religion, if of nothing else, it may be said, that it is utterly unknown, where there does not exist an habitual reference to God, where the affections towards God have never been called into exercise, or where there is not a principle of progressive obedience continually aiming at improvement and panting for perfection. It is true, that the term, religious, is not often vouchsafed to such men as have been described; but they are familiarly termed innocent, virtuous, unblamable. I need not say that those, who have formed no higher conceptions of religion than these, have yet to acquire the very rudiments of Christian excellence. They have not stepped upon the threshold of the gospel; they have not even inquired for the avenues to the sanctuary. To them it is nothing, whether anything is known of God or not, or anything of a future destination; much less do they know whether Christ has lived, or died, or risen, or left anything of importance to the knowledge or well-being of mankind. These men live for no purpose which does not terminate in some temporal advantage, or, at least, to which death may not put an effectual close.

Directly opposite to this negative notion of a religious character is the mistake of those who make it to consist entirely in services performed expressly towards God, as if he had an interest distinct from that of his creatures, or required our homage, either of conduct or affection, as if it were some advantage to himself. It is true, that the term, religion, is originally and properly applicable to the duties towards God, in distinction from those of social life; but to imagine that these services are valuable in any other respect than as they tend to promote some further purpose,

or to imagine that God is not served except by acts that are expressly directed to him, is to confound altogether the notions of religion with the demands of a superior. There is nothing, in the religion of Christ, which demands religious services from men purely for their value in themselves, but to answer some higher end, either of their improvement or comfort. The gospel does not teach us to confine our consciences to these religious rites, nor does it require us to consider the time, which is not spent in acts of this kind, as lost or wasted. It does not exclude the idea of holiness from other actions than those which have God for their object, from other thoughts than those into which the idea of him enters; but it makes all good affections a part of religion, all acts of kindness, and, indeed, the whole circle of our employments and pleasures, when they are wisely directed and gratefully enjoyed, a worship of himself. Neither does the gospel encourage us to judge of our progress in virtue by the number of our merely religious acts; but it estimates the worth of our character in all our relations, and especially regards the whole bias of the affections towards goodness. Such is the language of Jehovah himself. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord." In this I am by no means for discouraging the most diligent use of instrumental duties; nor would I, in any degree, diminish the value of services which we owe directly to God; for these require, in every way, to be encouraged or awakened. But it is to dispel the illusion, which prevails in some minds, that the value of a man's religion is to be estimated by the turn of his mind towards acts of worship, or by the time which is employed in them; and to impress upon you the conviction, that our duties towards God are of no value, unless the ef-

fect of them is perceived in our affections in general, and in the whole conduct of life.

Another mistake concerning the nature of religion is that which makes it only a source of comfort; a cordial, to be opened only when the spirit faints. It would make Christianity a pure dispensation of mercy, provided only to pacify the terrors of conscience, or administer comfort to the sick and dying. Hence the long delay in attending to a subject, which is expected to present itself, at last, in the guise of an angel of mercy, to bear away the departing spirit in the arms of love. By those, who take this view, the minister of religion is considered only in the light of a messenger of consolation to the distressed spirit. He is expected to appear at the couch of the dying, though he may never have been seen before, provided with every balm for the terrified conscience, and with tears of sympathy and words of love for the bereaved. Religion is thought something which may be grasped, when we are compelled to let go our hold of life, and of everything else which we have valued; a last resort, a provision for a moment of destitution or despondency; in short, a dispensation of unmingled, as well as unmerited grace. To correct this most dangerous misapprehension, it is sufficient, perhaps, only to have stated it; and I trust you will never indulge the idea, that you may, in the last extremity, adopt that, as a medicine, which you have never used as a daily nutriment, or that it is provided as an opiate for your last agonies, instead of being the food of the soul, on which it must have been nourished to everlasting life.

Perhaps I have already anticipated the misconceptions of those who seem to regard religion as a business separate from the usual occupations of life; who imagine, that, in

order to practise it with propriety, peculiar circumstances are necessary, and that peculiar situations must present themselves. Thus, one man is said to have time for religion, another is said to have been brought up to it; and it is thought, that something like disgust towards the usual condition of life must be excited, before religion can be attended to with any earnestness or pleasure.

That man has unquestionably a mistaken notion of religion, who supposes it to be impracticable in any lawful condition of life. It must first be the rule, before it can be the business; and, when it is sufficiently understood, it will only regulate, and by no means banish, our customary occupations. It may be superadded to, or associated with, all the varieties of an innocent and useful life, limiting, controlling, inspiring, and purifying the whole course of the thoughts, the conversation, and the actions. It is this false notion of the separate existence, if I may so express it, of the religious character, that has generated the swarms of unprofitable ecclesiastics, mystics, monks, devotees, and fanatics, in Christendom. It is this mistake, which leads the sensual and worldly to say to their faithful monitors, in their moments of compunction, "I look forward to the time, when I shall have more leisure to attend to the subject. I wish to escape from the pressure of my cares, that I may think of God; but, at present, I find no disposition to attend to the subject."

When I say that religion is not a separate employment, it is also true, that the Christian "walks by faith, and not by sight;" but he is travelling the same road with his neighbors, he must adopt the same conveniences, and share in the common accommodations of the way. The difference between the religious man and others is, that he keeps al-

ways in view the end of his journey. By this he regulates his time, his repose, his pleasures, his movements, and all the changes of his course. The irreligious man, on the contrary, imagines himself sent into the world on a mere excursion of pleasure. He stops by the wayside, he riots where he stops, he is impoverished, he is ruined.

Another false notion of religion is that which makes it to consist in certain unexplained impulses of the mind, or sensations of pleasure in particular views of Christianity, which cannot be made intelligible to those who have not experienced these sensations.

This propensity to make religion a spirit which is infused into the mind, rather than a healthy state of all the affections, and the perfection of that nature which we receive originally from God, is extremely flattering to the vanity of man. It establishes, at once, a kind of distinction, understood, however, only by those who boast of this rare faculty. It makes grace a privilege to distinguish the possessor, rather than a talent which all men may obtain and improve. It removes all the tests of real goodness out of the observation of the world, and places the standard in the feelings of the person, where it is accessible only by him who has the testimony of the spirit within himself. It seems to imply, that, for the purpose of attaining truth on the subject of religion, a new faculty must be created in the mind, the operations of which are not to be regulated by the common laws of belief, or explained in analogy with the common nature of man.

By these remarks I am very far from asserting that the feelings, sympathies, hopes, and fears of a man truly religious are not very different from those who have never made it a subject of serious reflection, or who have never

resolved to guide their conduct by its laws. But I mean only to assert that there is nothing extraordinary in a religious habit of the mind; nothing which may not be explained by the common laws of the human character, by the operation of religious motives, and the influence of hope, fear, and love, when enlightened with a knowledge of our duty, and grounded on the simple truths of the gospel. Religion must be recommended either by arguments which cannot be confuted, or by good effects which cannot be denied. If no further account is to be given of it than that it is a special favor vouchsafed to individuals, and that no words can describe its operation, all I can say is, that it must be left to those who possess it, while we endeavor to make the best use we can of our common interpretation of the gospel of Christ.

From what has been said on the subject of sensation in religion, I beg that it may not be understood, that I am insensible of the importance of the affections. I know, that, without them, we shall never find the ways of religion "ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace." I would only contend against that vanity, or that fanaticism, which would make the peculiarities of one man's feelings the test of another's sincerity, or which spends itself in exertions to excite a frame of mind, which produces little other good to ourselves or others than merely to exhilarate, while it lasts.

I have not dwelt so long upon this species of misapprehension of the nature of religion, because I think it the error into which you, my hearers, are most likely to fall; but only to guard you against the progress of an evil which, though small and secret ni its kindlings, may easily rise

into a conflagration, which will burn, till it strips society of its comfort and its ornament.

And now, my friends, to close this most important division of my discourse, I cannot forbear saying, that no mistake concerning the nature of Christianity, which is, at the same time, accompanied with a supreme fear of offending God, or with an unaffected love of the well-being of others, is half so much to be dreaded and to be lamented as that profound supineness and indifference to religion, which sometimes assume the name and the honors of liberality. Any existing form of superstition, any of the common stages of fanaticism, is to be preferred to that dead, sensual, worldly heart, which has never feared, never thought, and never resolved upon the service of God. Rather let us suffer all the terrors of superstition, and hear the voice of an angry God in every blast that rushes by us, or fear his frowns in every solitude, than live on without God in the world, without thought of eternity; in luxury, in selfishness, in secret sins, with the false and fearful misapprehension, that religion will come at last, and offer us mercy in our departing hour. Far better would it be, to spend our lives in the most childish acts of superstition, to count our beads and macerate our bodies, than that our hearts should be destitute of the love of God, or that we should imagine a religion may be tolerated by the God of love, in which our affections have no share.

I come now to the second part of my discourse, in which I shall attempt to give you some notion of the characteristic spirit of Christianity.

The spirit of Christianity is that which is peculiar and essential to it, and which may exist where its forms are impracticable, and where the terms of belief are not de-

fined. It is that which constitutes a man a Christian always and everywhere; in his church or in his family, in his prayers or his pleasures, in the fulness of his strength or in the last fainting exercises of his expiring life.

The spirit of our religion is, first, then, a spirit of faith. This always has been, and always must be, the earliest principle of a religious character. For it approximates what is remote, it illustrates what is obscure, makes us see what is invisible, feel what is spiritual, realize, as present, what is actually future, and receive, as strictly certain, what is, in truth, only highly probable. As the Apostle says, it is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen" and future. The spirit of faith is also a spirit of confidence in God, like that of a child in the paternal character of a father, or like that of a pupil in the superior wisdom and information of a master. The Christian feels the highest trust in the wisdom of God, and a tranquillizing persuasion of the benevolence of his designs. He anticipates, with as strong a confidence, the accomplishment of God's purposes in a future life, as he expects the events of the next week, or of the next morning. Hence all that he enjoys, and all that he suffers, he enjoys or suffers with some remote or immediate reference to his future existence; in taking a view of his own life, he cannot but include, at every glance, ages beyond the tomb. It is the privilege of faith, to furnish light along this length of being. This is not a spirit of credulity, but of trust; nor of presumption, but of tranquil hope; nor of pride, for it is a persuasion accessible to all; nor of dogmatism, but of legitimate and rational conviction. Deprive man of this faith, make it impossible or absurd, and our situation is like that of children without a protector; we wander

about, away from our Father in heaven, to lie down, at last, in death, with the fallen leaves to cover us.

The spirit of Christianity is, secondly, a spirit of devotion. God, who compasseth the path of his servants, is also in all their thoughts. The idea of God can never present itself to the mind of a real Christian, when he is not prepared to entertain it; therefore it is never unpleasant, never oppressive. He sees God in everything; the ordinary, as well as the extraordinary; the minute, as well as the vast; the painful, the pleasant, the material, the intellectual. To him all other objects are secondary; God is ultimate. Therefore, while God lives, he lives within his influence, and can lose nothing, can want nothing. He cannot look out upon nature without carrying his thoughts to its Author; and all the happiness which meets his observation, the activity and health of the inferior orders of creatures, even the fruitfulness of the soil, the sunshine, the rain, the seed-time, the harvest, remind him of God, as we see an absent friend in the place where he sat, the books he has read, the lines he has written, or the tokens he has left us of his remembrance.

The world, the Christian lives in, is God's; the beings, he loves and converses with, are God's; the joys, he reaps, are God's gifts; the disappointments, he encounters, are God's arrangements; the changes in external nature, in his affections, his pleasures, his pains, are to him perpetual indications of God's superintending care.

A devotional spirit gives also a cast of sublimity to the most ordinary character. It is this spirit which consecrates the habits of a man's mind, and lifts him into such a sphere that angels may hold converse with him. He takes a station among the orders of God's creatures, which earthly

and sensual men, however dignified by fame or honor, may look up to with reverence. The peculiar character of Christian devotion, unlike all other, is filial. The access to God is free. Every embarrassment is removed from the sincere votary, and his worship must be frank, filial, simple, and reverential.

The spirit of Christianity is, thirdly, a spirit of love. I need not here repeat the passages which assure us that "he, that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." If there ever was a scheme which had love for its origin, its tendency, and its consummation, it is that of the gospel. The man, who embraces it, shares a benefit with millions of individuals, it may be of worlds. It is impossible for a man, who is interested in the mediation of the Son of God, ever to feel as if he were alone in the world; for, in his relation to Jesus, he is bound to others by that fine union of sentiment, which cannot be felt in the perishing connexions of time.

Christianity binds us so closely to the happiness of the universe that the Christian rejoices continually in the prospect of good. He sacrifices, without a sigh, innumerable personal accommodations to that comprehensive object of benevolence, the recovery of human nature. He must inevitably grow rich himself, as well as enrich others, by every privation to which he submits for the sake of those for whom Jesus died.

He must also find perpetual satisfaction in the exercise of Christian love; because there is not a man on earth, who has not some claim to his interest. In the prospective benevolence of God, we are all equally dear. And even now, when we find ourselves among innumerable pilgrims, travelling to the same grave, wanting the same consolations,

exposed to the same fearful changes, the same heart-rending sorrows, and even the same final loss, and, at last, brought forth by the same resurrection to stand before the same Judge, with an untried region of life before us; and when we add to this the single word, *eternity*, even the poor embryo, who scarcely may be called an intellectual being, is to the Christian a precious life.

Once more; the spirit of Christianity is a spirit of joy. Not that the tranquillity of a Christian is not liable to be disturbed by the pains and sufferings of human nature, or that he exhibits the inconsiderate folly of the perpetually riotous and gay. But the state of his affections should be that of humble and devoted traquillity. To rejoice in the paternal character of a Being of whose presence you can never be unconscious, to adore a Being of whose protection you can never despair, or whose direction of your lot you can never suppose to be otherwise than merciful and just, is, surely, all that can be necessary to permanent joy.

It is the spirit of Christianity, to rejoice in the present, the past, and the future. In the present, because our joys and sorrows are not, at this moment, ultimate, but means to a future end. What we call calamity, or good fortune, in the affairs of states, or of individuals, in the eye of a Christian, are only footsteps of the revolutions of Providence, which are not to be dwelt upon with anxious interest. He rejoices in the past, because he has found, in his own experience, that what he dreaded, as sufferings, are truly pleasures in retrospection; and what he regarded as disappointments proved blessings in disguise. He rejoices in the future, because it is God's, and God's only; and, as he approaches the period of his own dissolution, he

finds the western hemisphere lighted up with streaks of setting lustre, and he looks forward, with humble hope, to an eternity of progressive improvement and happiness.

My friends, I can extend these remarks no further. Believe me, whatever we may call ourselves, whatever, in the hour of occasional reflection, we may wish to be, — it remains as certain as the word of God, "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" and the fruit of this spirit will always be "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the holy ghost." May God correct our errors, inspire our breasts, and teach us to feel the spirit of his religion!

SERMON VIII.

MATTHEW XXII. 5.

BUT THEY MADE LIGHT OF IT, AND WENT THEIR WAYS.

THE difference in the circumstances of Christians at the present day, and at the introduction of the gospel, is truly astonishing. The change in the external circumstances of the church, and, of course, in the nature of the temptations to which men are exposed upon assuming the Christian name, merit, my friends, our most serious consideration. Then it was a name of unequalled reproach. Christians were everywhere, at first, confounded by the pagan world with the Jews, among whom the new religion took its rise; and the name of *Jew* was then synonymous with all that was base, odious, and despicable. The situation of Christians among the Jews themselves was even less tolerable than among heathens. They were regarded as apostates from Moses, and traitors to God. The assemblies of the persecuted disciples were, at first, held in secret, often under ground, and usually in the night. He, who had the courage to enter this community, renounced, by this single act, every worldly prospect, and, not seldom, all the peace and credit of his life. Often was the Christian obliged to sever the tenderest ties of consanguinity, and, instead of love, to meet with hatred; instead of honor, with reproach; instead of peace, with persecution; instead of consequence,

with contempt and obscurity. Do you ask, What was sufficient to induce them to these sacrifices? I answer, in a word, Truth. Do you ask, what they gained in the loss of all the world esteemed? I answer, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding."

How altered is the condition of the church! The little band of twelve disciples has grown into a vast multitude, which no man can number. Eighteen centuries have been adding, with increasing rapidity, to the numbers, the wealth, the security, the consequence, the triumphs of the Christian world. The profession of Christians is no longer a badge of an enviable, or a dishonorable distinction. A name, which was once the signal of suffering, is now hardly a mark of attention. The Christian, like others, accumulates his wealth in safety; like others, he wears his honors thick upon him. He mingles with the bustling, the pleasurable, and the gay, and no finger of scorn is pointed at him. He may be obscure and useless, and no one explores his retreat; he may be famous, and no one plots against his elevation. Without are no fightings, within are no fears; and the harassed and humble Jesus, who had not where to lay his head, might, if he were to return again to earth, repose, every night, under the rich canopies and lofty ceilings of thousands who bear his name, and feast, every day, at tables where it would be necessary to work no miracle to furnish food for the guests. All, all is peaceful, except the inquietude of ambition, the insatiableness of avarice, and the mutual prejudices and conflicting interests of the followers of the humble Jesus.

Whence, then, this mighty transformation? Can it be, that a community, which originally grew by persecution and contempt, retains its proper character, when there is

neither reproach nor suffering to retard or to promote it? Have we now nothing to contend with, that is worth resisting? nothing now to fear, that can fill us with anxiety, or kindle us with hope? Would to God that the dread of religious sloth, the dangers of worldliness, the temptations to forget our character as Christians, were able to bind us as closely together as the scorn and cruelty of enemies from without! It may be, that the dreadful days of Nero and Diocletian are not to be recollected with horror. It may be, that more souls are now perishing in the debilitating air of peace than were lost to God in all the tempest of persecution. It may be, that we have slumbered, till the last blaze has flashed, and our lamps have gone out.

Of all the subjects which engage the attention of men, religion is, unquestionably, the most important, because it relates to the soul rather than to the body, to God, as well as to society, to eternity, as well as to the present world.

No man has ever thought seriously, as he should do, on this subject, but it must return to him again with more force and frequency after every new contemplation, tending continually to this point, to make religion not only the rule, but the business of his life. A man, who believes nothing of Christianity, may naturally consider it a subject of little importance; but he, who is convinced of its truth, because he has thought of it, will not, cannot, rest at that point. He will consider it incomparably the most important thing in life. It is that to which everything else may be sacrificed, if God should demand it; and this sacrifice may be made without justly exciting wonder, or supposing irrationality. He who is accustomed to consider himself in the light in which the gospel places us all, as a sinful creature, whose hope, here and hereafter, is only in the mercy of

God; he who places heaven and hell before his sight, and feels that his utmost exertions are necessary to secure the one, and avoid the other, — such a man, I say, must be as different from one who believes nothing of all this, as if a new sense had been imparted to him.

Unquestionably, one principal cause of the feeble hold, which subjects of religion have upon the mind, is the fancied remoteness of their objects, and the spiritual nature of the subjects of religious contemplation. What is immediately perceptible, tangible, pleasurable, or profitable, excites more emotion than any of those spiritual truths which a man must study his own heart in order to understand. To excite this attention is the great object of our preaching; and, to introduce my subject more immediately, I give you this anecdote of one of the most amiable men the world ever knew: In his last illness he was attended by a friend, who desired him, in his great wisdom and learning, to give him a short direction how to lead his life to the best advantage; to whom he only said, "Be serious; this is my parting advice to you, as what comprehends everything else I have said, BE SERIOUS."

My friends, till this seriousness is, in some way, excited, our labors are useless. The language of the preacher rolls over the attention like the morning dewdrops from the leaf, which fall to the ground, where they cannot be gathered up again. It is true, this serious temper may, in some cases, be produced by an alarming providence, a probing discourse, and even by private and inconsiderable occurrences, which the world does not observe. In others, where this disposition is more allied to the natural temper, it may be insensibly gaining strength as the character matures, though no very noticeable change, at any particular period, may

have occurred to draw the observation of the world. It is of infinite importance, especially for the rising generation, to know and feel that this seriousness is not enthusiasm; that, if what the gospel reveals is true, and we have so much to fear and so much to hope for beyond the limits of this mortal life, it is a subject which no rational man can long think of without the most solemn impressions. Our levity or inattention cannot affect their truth; and it is equally certain, that every moment, we waste, is bringing us nearer to the time, when we shall be satisfied of the reality of what we are now only urged to believe.

I shall now proceed to point out the difference between that seriousness which is the result of deep impressions of religion, and some other states of mind, which may be mistaken for it, or, at least, are thought to supply its place; and then I shall offer what I believe to be some of the characteristics of religious seriousness.

In the first place, there is in some men a certain constitutional moderation and sedateness of mind, which passes for a serious temper. These are persons of extreme regularity of life; men who are never thrown off their guard by violent emotions, either of joy or of apprehension, as to this world or the next. There is usually in such characters a great fund of worldly wisdom and of prudence, which keeps them aloof from excesses, and disposes them always to wish that the world may go on as it has done. They are afraid of any novelty or change in the state of affairs immediately around them; and hence they are the advocates for a peaceable continuance of old habits. They are what are called steady men, and are, indeed, of great value to the well-being of the community. They are held out to the young as examples of what they should aspire to

imitate; and it is much to be desired, that such a class of men, who are not the slaves of any visible vices, and not the promoters of any species of irregularity, should increase in a community, and give it stability and respect. But the sedateness which arises merely from moderated passions or selfishness, and the sobriety proceeding merely from ancient and regular habits, are very different from that seriousness which is produced by an habitual contemplation of the solemn truths which the gospel unfolds to us. This constitutional solidity of character may exist with the utmost indifference to religious truth. It may exist in a mind which never has been touched with the grand thought of eternity, and never has inquired, with trembling apprehension, what it shall do to be saved. That kind of religious insensibility, which presents nothing offensive in the external conduct, that uniform sobriety of deportment, which is never betrayed into any extravagance, which is perfectly contented with itself, and conforms to the external faith of a community, is the most difficult disposition in the world to awaken. There is no reaching such a heart by the ordinary applications from the pulpit. It is almost impracticable to probe a conscience which has never seriously reproached itself. The character, I have been describing, is extremely common. It is not a religious, it is a selfish, though a regular character. The man of truly serious impressions is often exercised with the most solemn contemplations, the most moving anxieties, the most humble and devotional sentiments. Real seriousness offers a ground for continual exertion and improvement; but the mere sobriety of a worldly man is always the same, always self-complacent, and, therefore, always stationary.

There is another class of serious men, which I choose

to rank under this head, because their character, though more intellectual, is hardly less removed from the seriousness of a religious mind. I mean the class of sedentary and studious men, whose pursuits, though they are intellectual and interesting, are not sanctified by any reference to God. This kind of life is extremely apt to flatter a man's self-complacency, and draw him off from a serious consideration of the most important subjects in the world, the state of his own heart, and his relation to God and to eternity. It is a state of mind, which deceives the most thoughtful, because it engrosses him with contemplations, which, though not as hallowed and sublime as those of religion, are yet very much above the ordinary occupations of the world. But this studious disposition may exist together with a total ignorance of the most secret faults and corruptions of the heart, the knowledge of which is the real foundation of a religious character.

Religious seriousness of temper is to be carefully distinguished from that constitutional melancholy with which it is sometimes associated. It is a favorite habit with many men, to account for any instance of mental despondency or derangement, by ascribing it to religious impressions. It is true, that, in some minds, predisposed to this dreadful disorder, it may, perhaps, be occasioned by new and alarming views of religion; and it is to be expected, that, where the most solemn subjects have gained possession of a mind of this cast, they should contribute to that fearful melancholy which the state of the health originally promoted, and even that they should appear most prominent in the thoughts and conversation of the person affected. But, even here, it is no more to be supposed, that religion is the necessary source of such despondency, than so far as religion, when it gains possession of such a mind, must, from

its very nature, engross it more completely than any other contemplations. The seriousness of a truly penitent mind is something different from any state of the body, or any disordered condition of the nerves. There is no more religion in melancholy, abstractly considered, than there is in levity, or an excessive flow of animal spirits. On the contrary, where religious ideas are firmly established in the mind, where they are distinctly apprehended, and properly associated with all the habits of thinking, they are the best security against the usual causes of despondency, and most effectually counteract the tendencies, which the constitution may possess, towards melancholy. Certain I am, that the careful observation of the character of the most humble and pious men will correct this misapprehension. It is true, that a man of habitual seriousness will see much levity in the world, which he cannot approve, and much enjoyment which he must regard as dangerous in its present effects and in its future consequences. But still he will be always cheerful, always serene; he will be ready to follow the injunction of the Apostle, and "rejoice always."

Lastly; religious seriousness is to be carefully distinguished from that spirit of discontent and surly despondency, of which we see so many examples. It is one thing, to be disappointed in our expectations from this world, and another, to be really solicitous about our fate in the next. It is one thing, to be dissatisfied with the lot which Providence assigns us here, and another, to be so far interested in the prospect of futurity as to be indifferent to the pleasures and pursuits in which the world is engaged. It is one thing, to despise a pleasure because we cannot share in it, and another, to regard it with indifference because it would interfere with our more serious pursuits. The pen-

sive cast of a querulous man's temper is not, in any degree, more favorable to religious impressions than the vain and light frivolity of an unreflecting and giddy mind. The man of real seriousness is also a man of humility. He compares himself, as he is, with himself, as he ought to be; and his dissatisfaction is not with the world, but with himself. He is not depressed because he is not thought of sufficient consequence in society, or because he cannot fashion his situation to his mind; but he is serious when he looks at his own ill deserts. He is dissatisfied with the world, it is true; not because he has been disappointed in his expectations, but because he sees so much to shun, and so much to fear. The thought of death makes him serious; but it is a thought which he does not, on that account, banish; and, if he is concerned to die, it is not about what he shall leave, but at what he shall find hereafter. Ambition, envy, and other selfish passions, may cast a gloom over the features and depress the spirits. But these are not the passions which make men serious; they rather shut up the mind against impressions of real devotion and the access of religious truth.

In what remains of this discourse I shall endeavor to present to you, as I proposed, in the second place, a few plain characteristics of a truly serious mind. What I shall suggest will be easily applicable by us to our individual characters, and will not be in danger of being confounded with the effects of that worldly sedateness which we have before described.

In the first place, a man, whose heart is habitually subject to religious influences, will not indulge himself, on any occasion, in that levity with which religious subjects are sometimes inconsiderately treated. He not only finds it

impossible to speak contemptuously or lightly of God, of our Savior, of the rewards and punishments of another life, but he will not even indulge himself in rashly condemning the mistaken, but conscientious, opinions of pious men. Everything, connected with eternity or the future condition of the soul, becomes, by this single alliance, a subject of too great importance to be made ridiculous. He is convinced that any religious impressions, however irrational, are much to be preferred to that deadly indifference which leaves religion entirely out of its meditations. Everything in conversation, or in conduct, which tends to weaken the influence of religious impressions, or to excite the doubts or fortify the prejudices of the world against the gospel, he observes with pain. It is a sensibility in the cause of God, which he does not endeavor to conceal. He is willing that the world should know that he considers the Deity too awful a Being to be made the subject of an impertinent remark, and the uncertainties of the future world too dreadful to be the sport of foolish contempt or thoughtless vanity. He is hurt by everything in the character and conduct of others, which tends to place subjects of everlasting importance in the light of indifferent facts, or convenient customs.

We shall perceive another criterion of religious seriousness, if we attend to the manner in which we observe the public ordinances of God's worship. We can easily inform ourselves, by a careful examination of our motives, whether we come up to God's house of prayer merely from long custom or decent formality, or from a solemn regard to the nature of the duty, and of the Being to whom worship is addressed; whether we appear here only to indulge one of the varieties of curiosity, or whether our hearts are really

solicitous to worship God, to humble ourselves, and gain instruction or encouragement in duty. We can judge, also, of the seriousness of our tempers by the state of mind, in which we observe the exercises of worship. If we find our thoughts dissipated, and our attention wandering, it implies that we are not sufficiently impressed with the solemnity of our employment. It argues, also, strongly against the seriousness of our religious views, if we are more disposed to be wearied with the tediousness, than satisfied with the devotion of the service; if we are more alive to any impropriety with which it may be conducted than to the impressive nature of adoration, the humbling influence of confession, the tranquillizing power of supplication, and the solemnity of all the subjects which are brought up to our attention. I hesitate not to lay it down, as an infallible maxim, that he, who is not serious in the worship of God, knows nothing of religion, nothing of himself. The fear of God has never fallen upon him; the sense of God's excellence, or of his own unworthiness, has never obtained possession of his mind.

A third test of the seriousness of our dispositions we shall find, whenever we consider the nature of our private thoughts on this subject, and especially of our private devotions. Perhaps, in the bustle of life and the rapid succession of amusements and pleasures, we may have been betrayed into follies which we cannot approve, and occupations which shut out religion from our thoughts. But, if we possess a really serious mind, whenever we can retire within ourselves and engage in our secret meditations, we shall find our sense of the importance of religious truth returning, with increased influence, to our minds; we shall find that the world, in which we have been dissipated, will

only have refreshed our interest and enhanced our satisfaction in religious contemplations.

If, on the contrary, we find that our pleasures in society have only made our devotions cold, our meditations irksome, our religious views indistinct, our expressions formal, and have shed over our minds a distaste for our duty and our religion, it is time to consider whether we have ever been seriously engaged in the service of God. It is time to consider whether our religion is not a mere compromise between God and the world, our conscience and our passions.

I could enlarge on this subject, but I forbear. I will only say to you, my friends, if there is anything on earth to make a man serious, it is death. And uncertain as we are of its distance, and sure as we are of its approach, within a few years, at most, the man, whom this thought does not solemnize, is not within the reach of other considerations. Death! my friends, — is it a mere word, or is it an event on which everything depends? Whose are we? Whither are we tending? What is our destination? Has God spoken to us on this subject, or has he not? If he has, can it be thought of, for a moment, with indifference? Till you have made this, then, the subject of your most serious considerations, I can say nothing which can reach you; and, when you have regarded it with the importance which it demands, I can say nothing to enhance its solemnity.

SERMON IX.

ACTS XV. 18.

KNOWN UNTO GOD ARE ALL HIS WORKS FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD.

IN a former discourse I attempted to set before you those proofs of the providence of God, which are derived from a contemplation of his character, as learned from the appearances of nature. In the present I wish to bring to your view those striking evidences of God's superintendence of the world, which are found in the history of revelation.

Before we proceed, however, to this part of our subject, allow me to say, that, if there is sufficient reason to believe that God has ever interposed, to reveal his own character and will, in any other way than by the unassisted exercise of human reason in the contemplation of his works, this is, in itself, a satisfactory proof of his providence. Revelation, then, is, in itself, the most substantial proof, which can be offered, of this great truth. But has God ever thus interfered in the concerns of mortals? It has been the invariable opinion of mankind, that he has; and the histories, which are contained in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, are full of such relations. Till, therefore, some reason can be given for the impossibility or improbability of the facts which we find these books to contain, they are, unquestionably, entitled to the same credit with any other authentic works.

These books contain also many remarkable predictions. If, then, it can be once made to appear, that any one of these prophecies has been circumstantially accomplished, the proof is complete of the providence and superintendence of the Divinity over the affairs of men.

But I wish to enter more deeply into this subject of revelation, and to show you, if possible, from a survey of the different dispensations of which the Bible gives us an account, that God has, from the first, maintained a moral care of mankind; that he has been seasonably providing for their religious wants, and has been carrying on, from the creation of the world, a vast scheme of human improvement, which illustrates his natural and moral providence.

The Bible, my friends, is distinguished from all other books that were ever written, or, at least, that now exist, in this circumstance: that it contains the history of these operations and purposes of God. Open it where you will, and you find traces of these operations. God is the grand object which it presents. His work is the great business which it discloses. His purposes are the grand points to which all its narratives direct us. In this book man appears under a different aspect from that in which he appears elsewhere; as a creature under the moral government of God, and the subject of God's retributive and provisory care; and the most vast and interesting views are opened of human destination and hopes.

It is with a mixture of gratitude and of awe, that I look into this book. It contains the history of God and man in their connexion and intercommunication, and it is the only work which throws any satisfactory light on the origin, and progress, and destination of the human race, as moral creatures. We find here, it is true, many extraordinary

relations, adapted to the infancy of mankind, and gradually becoming less frequent, as the faculties were unfolded and the moral notions of mankind were established. But, even in the history of these, we find the same proofs of a wise providence, in the order and successive perfection of the different dispensations of religion, that we find in the natural growth and intellectual progress of individuals. This proof of the divine superintendence I wish now to trace out with you.

In the Jewish and Christian Scriptures we have a history of a portion, at least, of this superintendence, and the portion in which we are most interested; of what may have been vouchsafed to other natures, we know not the manner, or the extent. After ascribing to one supreme God the creation and peopling of the world, they go on to explain the mode by which God maintained his government over his creatures, and gave them a just sense of religious and moral obligation. During this period of the world's infancy, we find that visible intercourse and audible communications of the Deity were common. Before mankind had learnt to deduce from the view of nature any notion of one supreme Intelligence, or had derived from experience any directions of conscience, or any knowledge of their real good, God condescended to instruct them frequently and copiously in the most necessary knowledge.

The history tells us that he placed the first pair in a garden, under a prohibition to eat of the fruit of a certain tree; but they yet, yielding to a temptation, disobeyed, and became subject to the dreadful consequences of transgression.

In this original dispensation there is shadowed forth to us the situation of mankind as moral beings. We are destined

to a species of happiness which depends upon a previous probation. The nature of virtue and happiness, as God has constituted it, everywhere supposes a capacity of transgression, and a period of trial. In the history, then, of our first parents, we have the first elements of a moral government; and everything, which we know of God, justifies his appointment of this original dispensation.

The subsequent condition of the world, as a state of labor, difficulty, temptation, and death, is represented as the consequence of this transgression of Adam. However we may choose to account for it, we may be certain that it was a part of the original plan of God, in training up human creatures for a superior state, that this should be the condition of humanity, and there is no reason why we should not be satisfied with the Scripture account of its introduction.

These ancient books contain many other accounts of the appearance and interposition of God, all directed to promote the same purpose, the growth of virtue and knowledge in the world. Hence the deluge, which swept away a corrupt race, when Noah was preserved to keep up the knowledge of God, and to commence a new era among men. The accounts, which we have of the frequent appearances of the Deity in those early ages, are perfectly suitable to the infant state of mankind. All the operations of nature, and all the changes and events of life, are there uniformly ascribed to the power and will of the Creator; and even whatever consequences follow the will of men are there imputed to the providence of God.

In process of time, we find that one peculiar people was selected from the multitude of nations, to give to the rest of the world, by their whole history and fate, a visible

specimen of God's providence. Abraham is called from the midst of his idolatrous kindred, and his family are made the depositaries of the religious knowledge which God chose to vouchsafe to mankind. This destination, sealed by the adoption of a peculiar rite, was introduced with reference to future consequences of vast importance to mankind. From this circumstance we may date all the religious knowledge which we now enjoy; and to it we owe this book of God, this church, which has existed, through so many hazardous fortunes, to the present hour.

The manner, in which God exhibited his providence towards the family and posterity of Abraham, is a subject of most curious contemplation. The purpose, for which they were prepared, was the most noble which can be imagined; to preserve the knowledge of one true God in the midst of an idolatrous world; and not only so, but to be the examples of the moral government of this God, in the instance of national remuneration in this world, for obedience to a prescribed and positive law; and to be the depositaries of those predictions by which the world was to be prepared for the Messiah, and that evangelical dispensation under which we live.

The history of this wonderful people, the posterity of Abraham, is full of proofs of some great purpose for which they were so greatly distinguished. Their original deliverance from bondage in Egypt, their peregrinations in the wilderness, their detachment from other nations, and, indeed, the peculiar notions of their own importance, which their singular fate generated among them, were all calculated to preserve them from the contagion of idolatry, and the corruptions of the surrounding world. They had perpetual proofs of the providence of the supreme Jehovah. Pun-

ishment invariably followed their apostasies; and, last of all, by their captivity in Babylon the remains of idolatrous propensities were rooted out of their minds, and they preserve, in every successive age, even to the present day, wherever they have been found, the singular belief of the great principles of theism, and the unity of God.

By the Jewish dispensation mankind were taught, as I conceive, in the way of national retribution, the moral government of God in this world. But a greater scene was to be disclosed; and the character of God, and the destination of man, as it extends to future ages and another life, was to be the subject of another revelation.

Predictions had been successively given of some great deliverer who was hereafter to appear, more fully charged with the purposes of the Most High. It was foretold, that he was to put an end to this more imperfect dispensation, burdened, as it was, with peculiar ceremonies and ritual observances; a deliverer, who, by his example, precepts, and death, was to give stronger evidence of some important principles of conduct, and to discover others, which had either been not revealed, or only obscurely intimated, under preceding dispensations. Under him mankind were to be brought to a more perfect subjection to the moral government of God, and to be formed into one great society, holy and happy, and to go on improving, till they should reach "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem."

The distinctions, which had been suffered to exist for the preservation of the Jews in their allegiance, were now to be abolished, Jew and Gentile to be brought into the same community, and God to be represented as the common Father of all men, exercising his government over

them with reference to a future life, when all would be made subject to an individual retribution and remuneration.

While our Savior was on earth, you know the powers which were imparted to him for the confirmation of his doctrine, and the authority that was committed to him in heaven and on earth, all for the purpose of establishing this last dispensation of the Most High, and for propagating and completing his religion. Miracles were necessary to gain attention to the gospel, and to give it authority, on its introduction; but you will acknowledge that a perpetuity of miracles would not only weaken that very attention, but destroy all that authority. When, therefore, God has sufficiently promulgated a revelation, he leaves it to ordinary and human means of preservation. It is left to the conduct of that nation or society in which it is planted, to be handed down by their care to posterity. It is a system of divine doctrines and established rules of life, and must be subject to the common methods of instruction, and taught like other sciences.

The consequences of this dispensation we find in the effects which it has already produced, and, we believe, will continue to produce, in the world. We know that much of the cruelty and superstition of paganism disappeared; that new lights of truth and virtue burst in upon the minds of men; and that multitudes were transformed into new, holy, wise, and pious creatures. Instead of the idolatry of the Gentiles and the ceremonial observances of the Jews, there arose, on their ruins, a rational and manly piety, produced by the new views of God's parental character and gracious designs. We know, that, from this era, there appeared among men a spirit of universal

and tender charity, which was before unknown and unimagined.

The religion of Jesus Christ gave a new character to the minds of thousands. It elevated, it purified, and spiritualized those who were before sensual and worldly. It gave them ideas of happiness superior to all other felicity. It taught them to despise the honors and the terrors of the world, and to aspire after the divine favor as an end, and the divine likeness as their glory.

These are justly called "the fruits of the spirit;" for it is the gospel, and the gospel only, when properly understood and heartily received, which has ever produced them. We find, in the first periods of the church, that it was remarkably productive of these effects; and the change is very striking, when we consider that the gospel was preached to men who had been born in the darkness of heathenism, and under the bondage of Jewish ceremonies.

And are there no effects of this kind yet produced? Has not the gospel now the same salutary efficacy? Is not its best influence to be traced in society? Is the purpose of God defeated? No, it cannot be, as long as the religion of Christ retains, as it ever must, the same credibility. The revolutions of the church, the successive periods of revival and declension, the temporary triumphs of infidelity, are all provided for in the plan of the Most High. The gospel is yet a powerful instrument in God's moral government. The Christian believes that all the revolutions, which the Christian world has known, were foreseen and provided for in this last dispensation; and, relying upon the accomplishment of past predictions, the Christian is warranted to entertain the confident expectation of the glorious and universal triumph of the religion of Jesus Christ.

This view of the divine dispensations suggests, among others, the following remarks.

There is a general uniformity of character in all these specimens of God's moral care of mankind. Goodness and wisdom characterize them all; as they are, also, instances alike of pure goodness and of unmerited care. There is no injustice or partiality in their limited introduction; though the whole race of men, that has existed on the earth, may not, at any time, have been admitted to share in the same degrees of supernatural assistance. In every case men will be accepted according to what they have, and not according to what they have not. God is not obliged, by any principle, to give to all men the means of the same degree of perfection, either in this world or the next; and those, whose capacity for revelation falls below that of those who have the advantages of a birth and education in Christendom, will find a reward suited to the enlargement of their minds, or a punishment proportioned to the degree of the advantages which they have abused. "To whomsoever much is given, of him" *only* "will much be required."

We may observe one common intention running through each of these dispensations, and that is, to promote the virtue and happiness of our race; and, though we are not placed in precisely the same circumstances with our first parents, to whom the original revelation was made, yet our situation agrees with theirs in this; we are upon probation, as they were, in order to form tempers of holiness, and in order to become worthy of eternal life.

It cannot fail to be remarked, that, as every preceding dispensation seems to have prepared the way for that which succeeded it, so they were, all and severally, adapt-

ed to the capacities, the progress, and the existing moral and religious state of mankind.

Every preceding dispensation seems, also, to have contained some intimations of that under which we live; and, from some expressions in the Scriptures, we have strong reasons to conclude that this is ultimate, and that all, that God intends to do for mankind, in the way of supernatural interposition, he has done by Jesus Christ.

These dispensations, of the history of God's moral government, furnish subjects of sublime and grateful contemplation to angels and to men. They represent God in the fairest and most interesting of lights, when we consider that all these have been known to him from the beginning of the world, and that his parental care discovers itself in every communication which he has made since man was created.

There are many circumstances in this history, which once appeared unintelligible, but which now we more clearly understand. Such, in particular, was the rejection and consequent fortune of the Jewish nation, once the people of God, which made the apostle exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Now we perceive how indispensable it was to make the divine origin of the gospel more apparent, and what strength it continues to add to its proofs.

If there are difficulties which yet serve to exercise our humility and our study, we must not be surprised. The great apostasies in Christendom, the growth of infidelity, and the present state of the world, are all preparatory to some more glorious era in the church. The morning of

the Reformation was preceded by greater darkness, moral and intellectual, than we have since known; and it is to be hoped, that we have not reached the meridian of this day, and that we shall not be obliged to pass through another night of religious darkness before the purposes of God shall be finished. But, however this may be, we have nothing to do but to preserve minds sincerely desirous of inquiring after the truth, meekly submissive to what God has revealed, and patiently to persevere in well-doing through all the changes of the present dispensation. To us Christians this is the language of God's grace: "Go thou thy way to the end;" for, after all thy trials and disquietudes, if thou preservest thy integrity and thy faith, "thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

SERMON X.

HEBREWS III. 12.

TAKE HEED, BRETHREN, LEST THERE BE IN ANY OF YOU AN EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF.

BETWEEN the two propositions, that the gospel is true, and that it is false, — between the belief that it is the revelation of God, and the opinion that it is the work of men, the chasm is so vast that it is impossible there should not be some great difference in the minds or in the hearts of those men who, with similar advantages and means, can form different conclusions upon the subject. The question with respect to religion amounts, in fact, to this: Is there, or is there not, any satisfactory assurance that this life is not the termination of man's existence? Are all the hopes, the fears, and the anticipations of mankind, that there is an eternity to come, merely uncertain and delusive suggestions?

The inquiry, whether the gospel be true, involves in it the question, whether God, who has given us our mental powers, our moral sense, and our anticipations of another life, has ever interposed for the salvation of this part of his creation; or whether man has always been left, upon a subject of such importance, to the weakness of his own unassisted reason, and the corruption of his actual condition. It involves the question, whether the Jewish history, at

present the most authentic in the world, is a mere fable, and, especially, whether that wonderful event of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which so many great and good men have sacrificed their lives to authenticate, is a gross delusion and imposition. In short, by the admission or rejection of Christianity, the aspect of the world is changed. If this source of hopes, fears, comforts, restraints, reasonings, and meditations, is blotted out of the human mind, its whole character must be changed.

Undoubtedly, in a fair and uncorrupted mind the bias would be altogether in favor of religion; for it makes of man a creature so much superior to what he would be without it, it raises him so much nearer heaven, and opens to him such sublime and exhilarating views with respect to God, to himself, and to society, that we should think the world would press to receive it, and that without it man would consider himself but half enlightened. Alas! it is not so. Thousands are busy in chasing from their minds every suggestion in its favor, and stopping their ears, lest the news of the gospel of peace should gain access to their hearts.

The object of this discourse will be to explain the sources of unbelief. I fear we shall find, that, in the language of the Apostle, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."

In the first place, I do not hesitate to say, that the least dishonorable source of infidelity is ignorance. Many think that to differ from the vulgar is to be superior to them; and that it is a proof of having thought deeply, to be able to start objections to the most common truths. But, of all the proofs of human weakness, I know none greater than that indolence of mind, which shows itself in the disposi-

tion which is satisfied with proposing difficulties, instead of searching for truths. The truth of the gospel is a fact of which, at first, it required only the exercise of the senses, to satisfy one's self. Of course, there was no need of learning, to be a well informed Christian. But now, at this distance of time, it has become a work of superior knowledge and fairness, to understand and illustrate its true foundation, and a very superficial employment, to suggest objections, because time has already furnished them to our hands. It is no longer a test of superior sagacity, to doubt the truth of a religion which the most gifted minds have believed, relying upon great and various and impregnable proofs; though few of those, who receive it, have ever examined the whole grounds of their faith, or felt the most serious objections.

It may be remarked, without danger of contradiction, that, of those who reject the gospel, the majority are extremely ignorant of Scripture, and in this branch of necessary knowledge are very much inferior to many Christians, whom they venture to despise. Their reading has been in a different direction. Hence, all they know of the Old and New Testament is, perhaps, that there are passages in them, which are strange or unintelligible; and thus they venture to decide upon this most grand and solemn question, often without having read, much more having studied, the book which reveals the destination of the human race.

I may venture yet further to assert that few of those, who reject Christianity, possess much of the knowledge which is necessary to a thorough understanding of the Scriptures. They do not consider how unreasonable it is, to expect that books written, as many of those of the Bible were, more than two thousand years ago, and in a dead

language, should be as intelligible as the books which appear every day, in their vernacular tongue. They do not consider that it would have required a perpetual miracle, to preserve the meaning, in every place, from obscurity, the text from corruption, or the pen of every translator from mistakes. In consequence of this ignorance and narrowness of mind, they are disgusted with everything which they cannot, at once, reconcile with modern opinions, language, and manners; they are overthrown by every difficulty, and find only arguments for infidelity in everything which they do not understand. They are men of business, perhaps, and have not the previous information necessary to understand their Bibles; they are men of wit, and think that everything, which is not sparkling or ingenious, is dull; they are men in office, and have no time to think deeply of these subjects, which, they are inclined to believe, are, at least, of doubtful importance; or they are men of fashion, and do not find that religion is ever thought of in polite circles. Thus they live with the reputation of superior wisdom, because they are really ignorant of what they venture to despise, alive only to objections, and only insensible to proofs.

But it must, in the second place, be impartially granted, that another source of infidelity is found in the misrepresentations which have been made of the Christian doctrine. Subjects of doubtful disputation have been exalted into articles of Christian faith, and men have been required to believe, not merely that God has given us a revelation, but also just such a revelation as men, in language unauthorized by Scripture, have chosen to frame. One man, travelling through countries which are called Christian, meets, at every step, the mummery of unmeaning ceremo-

nies, the superstition of an enslaved people and hypocritical priests, and he forgets that all this may not be Christianity. Another, of a serious and candid mind, is, perhaps, thrown into the vortex of fanaticism. He finds Christianity is made to consist in agitations of the passions, and is explained in a mysterious dialect, which to him is utterly unintelligible. He sees the effect of this mechanical excitement, for which he cannot account; he sees the influence of religious sympathy upon the minds of thousands, and he falls into this snare, that reason can have little to do with a system which encourages such follies, and that it was originally altogether the delusion of weak and wicked minds.

How few, my friends, of those who believe in Christianity, have taken their religion from the New Testament! They have received all their ideas on this most interesting subject from their nurses, their catechisms, or their preachers; and, when they have found that some of the doctrines, which they had received for Christianity, were irreconcilably opposed to the subsequent discoveries of their minds, instead of informing themselves of the real doctrines of Scripture, they have rejected the whole, as unintelligible, or absurd.

It must be allowed, also, that some men have insensibly slid into infidelity by attempts to simplify the system of Christianity. They have concluded that what was so very reasonable and intelligible could not be a subject of special revelation, and thus have they brought themselves to a refined species of deism, in which there is left nothing supernatural, nothing peculiarly proper for miraculous interposition. But they have soon found that the difficulties in mere natural religion, without that humility which is the

real foundation of all faith, become insuperable, and the transition is not difficult to atheism and universal doubt. The progress of innumerable minds has been from irrational views of Christianity to total unbelief. My friends, if we would all first satisfy ourselves of the historical evidence of the gospel facts, and then, each for himself, carefully study the New Testament, and find his religion there, we should not see so many dogmatical, or so many incredulous minds; we should not see the Calvinist passing into the deist, the atheist, the universal skeptic, and, through mere want of repose, falling back into the bosom of an infallible church. No, it is from our having taken our religious opinions from authority, and not from the Scriptures, that we see so much uncertainty and contradiction among Protestants.

It must, thirdly, be admitted, that another source of unbelief is pride. We now draw nearer to the meaning of our text, and we shall find reasons enough to justify the censure of the Apostle, when he calls it "an evil heart of unbelief." A superficial observer may be inclined to accuse us of uncharitableness, when we say, in the language of the Prophet, "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee;" and we shall be asked, How can a man avoid believing upon proper evidence? I answer, that there is nothing so easy as to avoid conviction. In every question which is not intuitive or demonstrable, in every question of fact or of opinion, where nothing more than moral certainty can be obtained, perhaps there is not a subject in the world, in which men's previous dispositions do not promote or retard their belief. We see instances of this in the plainest matters of fact, of every day's occurrence, facts which, with precisely the same grounds of belief, are reject-

ed or admitted, according to the party, the prejudices, the hopes, or the fears of the individual.

Do you ask how pride may have so great a share in the conclusions which men form on the subject of religion? I answer, in the first place, the gospel appears, upon the face of it, to contain a religion, not for this man or that, who may wish to know more than his neighbor, but for the poor, as well as the rich, the low, as well as the high, the illiterate, as well as the learned. It is a blessing which is accessible to any man, without the aid of any of those exterior distinctions which constitute the pride of so many weak, as well as of so many superior understandings. The man, who embraces the gospel, is sensible that in this act there is nothing which distinguishes him from the vulgar, and he is unwilling to believe, even on satisfactory evidence, what his poor neighbor believes without any evidence at all. The very first principle of Christianity is humility. It implies that something has been done for man, which he could not do for himself; and he, who is not willing to acknowledge his dependence upon God, and who is not prepared to believe that God may have revealed something to the humblest understanding, which his own unaided reason could not have discovered, and cannot now completely comprehend, in all its connexions with other truths, is at an immense distance from the reception of Christianity. Nothing is more hostile to pride, either of intellect or station, than the gospel. Every line of it teaches dependence upon God, ignorance of his purposes, and reliance upon his mercy alone. It raises the lowly, and depresses the proud. It scorns the pageantry of the world, and assures us, that, in the eye of one Being, at least, "there is no respect of persons." Few, very few, are the minds

which can come to the examination of such a religion with unbiased affections.

A fourth and more important source of unbelief remains to be examined; and that is, the previous disinclination, which a man of corrupt and vicious character must necessarily find in himself, to a system so pure and intellectual as that of the gospel.

Here I shall be arrested, at once, by the reproach, that it is invidious and uncharitable, to charge to the corruptions of a man's heart, rather than to any other cause, that he does not think as we do upon any speculative subject, however important it may be in our opinion; and you will tell me that such an argument is unfair, because, from the very nature of it, it must be unanswerable. You will tell me that no one has a right to make use of it but God, who searches the heart, and who, therefore, alone knows the powers, opportunities, and unavoidable prejudices of every man's mind. But this is not a just statement of the question. We do not say that he, who rejects a system of belief, which we consider true, as well as pure and holy in the highest degree, proves, by this simple act, that it is a corruption of heart, that leads him to this rejection. No; for, however strong the presumption, that his understanding is in this case biased by his passions, it belongs neither to you, nor to me, nor to any other observer, to pronounce upon the fact, but to Him only who "seeth not as man seeth." We do not say this. We say only that a man, who is corrupt, or selfish, or worldly, will be antecedently disinclined to believe a system which condemns his favorite propensities. We do not say that his unbelief is infallibly to be charged to his corruption; we say only that his corruption must have a tendency to prevent his belief. Do

you not see that the former is judging a man's heart and character from what he professes to believe, and the latter is merely showing what a man's character and propensities are likely to incline him to believe?

The influence, also, of a man's depraved habits or affections is unavoidably greater on this question of religion than on any other, because it is, of all the questions which can exercise the human mind, the least of a merely speculative question. You would be as likely to believe that there was such a man as Alexander, or to admit one of the axioms of mathematics, with a corrupt, as with a pure heart, with a dishonest, as with a fair understanding. But it is not merely a speculative inquiry, whether God has, or has not, revealed his will to mankind. It is not merely a matter of curiosity, whether you are or are not accountable to any other tribunal than that of society, and whether a future and eternal existence depends, or not, upon your habits and character in this life. These are questions which involve the whole of man's duty and expectations. You must be an entirely different creature, if these have, from what you may be, if they have not, been the subjects of an authenticated revelation from God himself.

But you will tell me that a man's duties remain the same, whether there has been a special revelation of them or not; the dictates of conscience are equally powerful, and the law of nature remains in all its force. Conscience, my friends, what is the authority of conscience, without the belief of the existence of God? And what is the value of a belief in the existence of God, if that God has discovered no interest in the affairs of the world, and there should be no future state, where his righteous and fearful retribu-

tions shall be dispensed? It is of little consequence, that a God exists, if you have no more to do with him than the bare appearance of the present state of things discovers to you; and if you have nothing to fear or to hope from him, but for the few years you have to live on earth; and, even during this period, if you believe no more of him than that such a Being exists somewhere in the universe. Can you shelter yourselves under this miserable subterfuge? Look at the standard which the faithless man of the world sets up for himself, and answer me, does it lay those restraints? Does it condemn those indulgences in which irreligious men allow themselves, without the loss of much tranquillity, or of much credit in this world? Will a man, who lives only for the present world, approach to the purity of one who lives by faith, and not by sight? In the same proportion, then, as the purity of the rule and the greatness of the sanctions of revelation exceed the laws of society and the fears of present inconvenience, must the indisposition of a depraved man to the gospel be stronger than to any other truths which the mind can receive.

Again; the man, who knows the least of Christianity, knows that its spirit, if not its verbal precepts, is always at war with many of the maxims by which the world is governed, and is plainly contradictory to the sensual propensities of the human heart. You cannot open the New Testament but you meet with some maxim like these: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God": "He that will be my disciple, let him deny himself," says our Savior, "and take up his cross, and follow me": "This is a hard saying, who can hear it." This, however, is the character

of the gospel morality; and the sensual man discerns, in this first glance of the features of Christianity, the expression of an enemy's countenance, and he turns away in fear or aversion.

Here is a man who is devoted to the perpetual accumulation of wealth, so that his ruling passion is the acquisition of property. Surely, that religion can excite nothing but aversion in him, which elevates the poor to a level with himself; which denounces the avaricious and worldly spirit that places all its pride and confidence in wealth; and which even goes so far as to inform him that circumstances may arise, when, under pain of God's displeasure, he must willingly give up all this mighty mass of treasure for the sake of truth and virtue. Such a man would gladly be excused from believing so hard a system, and willing to remain, at least, undecided, if he cannot, with an easy conscience, utterly reject it.

There is a man of an irascible temper, who cannot endure opposition or forget an injury. Surely, he will not receive, without infinite difficulty, a religion which is utterly at war with his passions, and with passions, too, which his commerce with the world informs him are not very dishonorable, and which most of the men in similar situations with himself are disposed, above all others, to excuse. How willingly will such a man consent to remain in doubt of the authority of the meek and forgiving religion of Jesus!

Take the innumerable slaves of sensuality, who live for the gratification of appetite, or the more gross pleasures of voluptuousness. Can they consent to believe that a religion has the express sanction of God in its favor, which declares that neither whoremongers nor adulterers shall have part with the children of God; which commands us

to crucify the flesh, and abstain from those lusts "which war against the soul"? Oh! no. Who loves to have his dream of security interrupted? Who will give his hand to a guide to lead him to a spot, where an abyss of perdition opens under his feet? a spot, where he thought the ground was firm and solid under him? Who will bare his bosom to that piercing light which lays open the miseries of his heart? It may, perhaps, be false, such a man will say; why should I disturb myself with additional proofs of its truth?

Let those, who would quench this heavenly light, let those, who would reject the gospel, consider, for a moment, where they would leave the world, and to what they would reduce it. Suppose the gospel of Jesus rejected, and the restraints of Christianity universally thrown off, the belief of its most alarming and its most comforting truths alike discarded. Suppose the faith of the world, after wandering up and down among the speculations of unassisted reason, left to find for itself a place to rest. Suppose the authority of the sacred books overthrown, the history of Jesus of Nazareth rejected as an idle tale, the institutions of his religion without support and without respect, and all the fears and hopes of a future life banished, like the dreams of heathen mythology. Then let us revisit this earth, emancipated from Christianity, and in rebellion against God, and what should we find? The minds of the few virtuous torn with doubts, and the understandings of the common people enveloped in gross darkness; the beds of the dying planted with anxiety; the bereaved sunk in stupid amazement, or unconsoled anguish; the penitent without relief, the impenitent without fear; the dying and the dead alike without knowledge or hope;

the poor without friends; the rich without restraint; the cries of suffering humanity ascending without the hope of being heard; and the world left without a Savior, to grope its way to eternal life.

Let him, who loves not to look at this picture, reflect, before he rejects the gospel. If it is true, it is as interesting to this man as to that; if it is true, our salvation is as much involved in its reception as that of the humblest creature to whom it has been preached. Blot it out, and the darkness, which would ensue, would envelop in the same gloom the vale of humble life and the summits of human greatness. Blot it out, and the world would be condemned to revolve through the same ages of confusion and corruption, which preceded the appearance of the Savior.

Christians, allow me to address to you a few words of exhortation, in relation to this subject in which you are so deeply interested.

In the first place, know on what foundation you stand. You may have a faith, perhaps, sufficient for your own satisfaction; but, as you are not to live for yourselves alone in this world, so ought you not to believe for yourselves alone. The situation of the world is such that the cause of truth may suffer as much from your inability to defend it as even from your open violation of its dictates. The time has now come, when the gospel is not to be maintained by the bare authority of any man, how transcendent soever may be his understanding. The objections of the unbeliever are ready furnished to his hands; the replies to these objections are not to be learnt from every man's mouth. The gospel is not to be supported by saying that it was the faith of our ancestors, or that we have so found

it in our catechism. If you are not ready to give the true "reasons for the hope that is in you," you stand upon an insecure foundation. The true foundation of the gospel is in its truth as an historic fact. From this view of the question unbelievers have always shrunk; and it is this which you should be best prepared to establish. If those, who were the most interested to ascertain the miraculous facts of the gospel, can be shown to have believed them, we have every reason to believe them; and, if these facts stand upon stronger grounds of probability than any other facts in history, everything else of importance in Christianity follows.

Secondly, the more frequent and open are the encroachments of infidelity, the more are you in danger of wishing to conceal a faith which your inquiries have forced upon you, but of which you cannot be ashamed without the most alarming danger. You may be excellent men and good citizens, exemplary in your manners, and irreproachable in your conversation, and thus you will, no doubt, be respected; but not, my friends, in that character which you ought most of all to value, the character of a Christian. The world, not knowing upon what principles you act, will not ascribe your superiority to its true cause; nay, they will account for it in any way rather than refer it to a principle of religious faith. Hence the propriety and duty of an open profession of your Christian faith. If you neglect this, Christianity will gain nothing by your example, and society will hardly be made wiser or better by your means. But, where the faith of Jesus is professed, as the source of all that is good in your character, you give to the Savior that homage which his gospel deserves, and "your light will so shine before men, that they may glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Thirdly, remember that your superior knowledge and purer faith demand of you a purer practice and a loftier sense of duty. The question, "What do ye more than others?" is the most unanswerable in the whole circle of unbelief. It will be to no purpose, that you can defend the gospel in your reasonings, if you betray it in your lives. Men will look to you, and with perfect justice, for a holy and a devotional temper. They will expect to see you more indifferent to this world, and more interested in another, than themselves. They will look for a disinterested spirit of benevolence, and a superiority which everywhere discovers that you are influenced by principles of more than earthly origin and energy.

Lastly, be not satisfied with having been once convinced of the truth of Christianity, but keep up your interest in it by constant and devout reading of the Scriptures, and of such books as tend to interest you in their important truths. Let nothing divert you from the duty of prayer; for the sense of God's providence can in no other way be preserved in all its strength. Consider everything in life as subordinate to religion. Surely, if there is another life, everything must be subordinate, in the view of every sound mind. Let the children of this world give their whole attention to its perishing pleasures; for so they ought, according to their principles. But you, Christians, children of light, heirs of immortality, look beyond this transitory scene of things, to that inheritance which is "incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away," the object not of sense, but of faith, "reserved for you in heaven."

SERMON XI.

MATTHEW VI. 24.

NO MAN CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS.

THIS is one of those aphorisms full of meaning, in which the discourses of our Savior abound, and with which he introduces his caution to his disciples against anxiety about their present accommodation. He represents the service of the world and the service of God as two opposite states, incompatible with each other; and, as no man can, at the same time, obey the commands of two masters, each of whom has a claim on his time and labor, so neither can we serve God and the world, for it is impossible to maintain such a divided state of our affections. The claims of the two masters will be perpetually interfering, and we must prefer the interests of one to those of the other.

The disciples must have felt the force of this illustration. The service of the gospel, to which they were called, was absolutely incompatible, not merely with that excessive solicitude about the conveniences of life, which is always a sin, but even with the common care of their families and estates. It was, in fact, saying to them, If you enlist yourselves in the service of the Messiah, you must give up all ideas of accumulating wealth, and, forsaking all care and anxiety, devote yourselves to this new employment.

But this is not merely a lesson to the apostles. The word, Mammon, is the name of a Syrian idol, supposed to preside over riches; and to this specific meaning of the word our Savior, undoubtedly, refers in our text, where the false deity, Mammon, is opposed to the true God.

What, then, is the force of the aphorism in modern language? Is it not this, that no man must hope to divide his services between God and any other object of affection; that the service of the Supreme Being demands supreme affection; or, in other words, religion, if it exists at all, must exist as a prevalent, governing principle? The effect of this will be a consistent and uniform character, in which we may plainly perceive the influence of religious motives, and a principle of obedience to God.

The subject of our discourse from these words, "No man can serve two masters," is the consistency of the religious character.

This subject, which is very plain in itself, is rendered difficult only by the perverse disposition of men to make this consistency of character signify the same thing with perfection. Hence they attempt to elude the reproach of inconsistency by saying, We know that we are not perfect; perfection is not the lot of humanity. This is very true, but it is nothing to the charge. We complain of an habitual inconsistency of character in men who profess to be men of religion; that they allow themselves in certain courses of life, and in uniform omissions of duty, which we maintain to be utterly incompatible with a prevailing sentiment of religious obedience. We perceive, in fact, that, so far are they from earnestly striving after Christian perfection, their hearts are yet divided, and they spend their lives in poor attempts at reconciling their convictions with

their practice, their real pursuits with their acknowledged obligations, their sins with their better resolutions.

In other affairs we find no difficulty in understanding the difference between consistency and perfection of character. When a man, slavishly devoted to the acquisition of riches, is guilty of an action of gross imprudence or extravagance, we are astonished at his inconsistency, because he acts against his governing principles; but we consider it as no mitigation of the selfishness of his character. The very notion of Christian perfection, as a point to which we must be continually tending, but which we are not to expect to reach, completely excludes us from offering it as an excuse for any of our miscarriages; because, if an excuse for any, it must be, from the very nature of the thing, an excuse for all. The subject, then, which we have in view at present, is not the involuntary or occasional defects of men who would be called religious, but their deliberate and habitual inconsistencies of conduct, which prove the absolute want of the religious principle, according to the maxim of our Savior, that "no man can serve two masters."

We suppose ourselves to be now addressing those who retain, in their hours of reflection, a belief, more or less powerful, of the obligations of morality, and the truths of Christianity. They have not cast off all fear of God, and gone over deliberately to the party of unbelievers, but they are not decided whom they will serve. They would be shocked at the imputation of irreligion; yet they do not believe, or do not feel, the inconsistency between their principles and their practice; and they have very inadequate conceptions, I do not say of the perfection, but of the uniformity and congruity, of the Christian character.

In the first place, it may be thought superfluous, that we should rank in this class those inconsistent men who would substitute a sound faith for a holy and virtuous life; for this is not the prevalent mistake of the age. It is supposed, that the days have gone by, in which everything was thought lawful for the orthodox believer, and that God would see no sin in the faithful. It is true, that this is not the place, nor is it, perhaps, the period, in which this error prevails. Christians have, in general, come to a better understanding of the language of Scripture on the subject of faith; and it is universally acknowledged in words, if not in practice, that, "without" personal "holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

There is still, however, a remnant of this error to be seen among those who secretly maintain that no life of piety and virtue is of any avail to salvation, unless it is accompanied with certain peculiar views of the doctrines of Christianity; and that an apparently habitual conformity to the laws of God is only a show of doubtful and rotten fruit, unless the tree has grown in a particular direction, and the roots have been fed from consecrated fountains. This kind of Christianity prevails much in some places; but it is not confined to any particular sects. We find persons among ourselves, particularly at the close of life, who are more anxious to die sound believers than real penitents. And there is hardly any place, where a stress is not laid on some peculiarities of faith, which would be much better placed on some points of practice.

But, as this is not the danger into which you, my hearers, are most likely to fall, I will observe, secondly, on the opposite error, of substituting morality for religion, and supplanting faith by an unenlightened exal-

tation of virtue. It is surprising, that any, who profess to believe in the truth and importance of the Christian revelation, should undervalue the influence of faith in the doctrines of the gospel, in the formation of character. Yet it is too plain, that we are disposed to substitute amiable tempers in the place of virtue, and the regularity induced by habits of business for religion. We need no stronger proof of this than the neglect, which prevails, of impressing on the minds of children the great truths of religion, the fear of God and of a judgment to come, compared to the care which we manifest to establish them in life, and put them in a course of occupation, which shall save them from the temporal ruin attendant on profligacy. Yet how are we to secure the characters of our children, if, trusting to their amiable dispositions, we take no care to give them principles; and, leaving them exposed to all the temptations of a corrupt world, we think it of no consequence, how or when they get their religion; and imagine, that, if they stand well with society, they may do well enough without Christianity? This is an inconsistency which, in a Christian parent, is irreconcilable with his own persuasions, and with a religious character. It proves that his own faith is dead, that it is not the root and support of his integrity, that he feels not the worth of his religion, and, of course, that he lives not by it. Men have declaimed loudly against the evils of superstition, and the dangers of implicit faith. Let us be on our guard against the vain expectation, that a character thoroughly virtuous, and faithful toward God and man, is to be supported by any consideration of present convenience, honor, and profit, without the aid of the motives of religion.

We discover other proofs of inconsistency, in the reliance

which is sometimes placed on the positive institutions of Christianity, as a species of compensation for not leading a life uniformly virtuous, or for indulging a temper not sanctified by the prevailing influence of religion. There is scarcely any Christian who will openly acknowledge that he indulges the hope of making a compensation for a negligent and dissipated course of life, by observing with punctuality the returns of the ordinance of the Supper. Yet, if we mistake not, there are some, who feel little of the universal obligation to a holy life, who yet place much confidence in their distinction as communicants, and, by their strict attention to these days, in preference to the other returns of public worship, intimate that they look upon this ordinance not merely as a duty and a privilege, but as something also of a security.

But it may be thought, that the opposite character, which we are now, in the fourth place, to describe, is much more common in our times. There is, no doubt, a prevailing disposition to represent the positive institutions of our religion as a class of duties much below the obligations of morality.

And, let it be remembered, that by morality is commonly meant merely the social obligations which exist between men in society; mercy, beneficence, courteousness, and honorable conduct. If the duties of piety are taken into the account, they are passed over with the remark, that they are affairs between God and a man's conscience, and that a good life is the best worship. This is very true; yet men are often much mistaken in the essential properties of a good character. It is, I fear, too often taken for granted, that a serious attention to the duties and forms of religion throws a suspicion on the other parts of a good character, and that there must be a little hypocrisy, where

there is much appearance of religion. It may be left to the serious and candid judgment of every thinking man, whether a faithful observance of the forms of religion and the ordinances of Christianity is not more usually connected with a virtuous and upright conduct in the affairs of common life than with the opposite character. How unfair is it, then, to put in a claim to respect, and confidence, and honor from the world, because you profess to undervalue the ordinances of religion, and to say, in fact, to the religious man, Stand by, thou mayst be holier, but I am better than thou! But is not this strange inversion of spiritual pride sometimes to be discerned in men who set at nought the forms of religion? If, my hearers, we cannot "serve two masters," but must either "hate the one and love the other," or "hold to the one and despise the other," whom must those be said to serve who devote days and weeks and years to the business and pleasures of the world; who, in the pursuit of gain and the varieties of endless dissipation, are never weary, never reluctant, never prepared with an excuse, whilst they grudge every hour which they devote to the exercises of religion; and this, too, with the plea, that God looks not at the outward appearance, but at the heart, that he will have morals, not ceremonies, mercy, and not sacrifice? Gracious God! to whom do they sacrifice? Nay, where do they sacrifice? They think, indeed, with truth, that worship is not more acceptable to God on one day than on another. But would he, who is disposed to worship God at all, think that he could possibly serve the cause of real religion, in opposition to superstition, by his neglect of the most favorable opportunity for it, which this day always affords? It is true, there is a perpetual tendency in men to rest in the means of religion rather

than to keep in view the end; but neither virtue, piety, happiness, security, nor anything valuable to man, can be promoted by attempting to secure the end, without the means. "My son, give me thy heart," is the tender invitation of our Father in heaven. But has he given his heart, who excuses himself from the rational services of religion by pretences which he would not dare to offer in the common business of life, and for reasons which never detain him from his pleasures, and would have no force with him in any case where his ruling passion was engaged?

In the last place, we observe the inconsistency which we have been condemning, in that partial obedience we are contented to pay to the commands of God, and in the various compensations and comparisons we make between one duty or disposition and another, both in our estimate of our own characters and the characters of others. Thus, the avaricious and hard-hearted comfort themselves with the consciousness of their honesty, and with the plea, that they are never guilty of extravagance, improvidence, luxury, or dissipation. The man of pleasure boasts of his charities, his frankness, his freedom from sordid and narrow-minded vices; and not only so, he looks with contempt on his frugal and regular neighbor. The man, who has amassed a great estate by fraudulent means, will attempt to make an atonement for his former life by some occasional acts of pious munificence. In some circles beneficence has the preference; in others, commercial integrity; in others, fidelity in friendship; in others, religious zeal. We select, from the universal obligations of morality, those in which we think ourselves least deficient, and look with complacency through the glass which is colored with our favorite hue.

This character of inconsistency is totally distinct from that of the weak and imperfect Christian, whose strong passions occasionally surprise him into acts of which he repents, or who is sensible of the imperfection of his best services, notwithstanding his daily endeavors after improvement.

My friends, it becomes us most seriously to remember that the habitual and deliberate neglect of a single commandment implies a disposition of revolt, of rebellion, and of resistance, totally inconsistent with a religious character. It implies that all our pretences of reverence for our Maker are hollow and dissembling; it implies that we practise upon ourselves delusions the most gross, when we imagine that the observance of one law will atone for the violation of another; that a man may be charitable without being just, or just without being charitable; honorable without being pious, or pious without being honorable; sober without being chaste, punctilious without being exact, or generous without prudence and care; zealous without being candid, or candid because indifferent and careless; ceremoniously exact without being pure within, or so pure within as to despise any aid from without.

When a sincere principle of universal obedience is wanting, the defect will infallibly be seen in some portion of the character, or some period of the life. In the goodly superstructure of such a man's morals there will be found some flaw, which betrays the insecurity of the foundation.

There is nothing which renders a man's real virtue more suspicious than to find him professing to be immaculate in those portions of his character, where he has no temptation to transgress. You have no right to thank God that you are not as other men, because, while your neighbor is intemperate, you have no temptation to become drunkards;

while your superiors are proud, you are only envious of their high station; while your friend's family is extravagant, yours is only churlish; while your vicinity is full of dissipation, your own household is employed in calumniating their characters and conduct. Hence, however extravagant the assertion may appear, we may admit, in its most literal meaning, the declaration of the Apostle, that he, who "offends in one point, is guilty of all." The presumption is, that all your show of virtue is only a disguised, but perpetual, violation of the only true principle of Christian morality, obedience to the will of God.

When you appear, therefore, to reform, and only change your forms of disobedience, all, that can be admitted in your favor, is, that you have not been, through the whole course of your life, the regular slave of any inveterate habit. In your abundance, you have not been guilty of the low frauds of indigence; and in your poverty, you have not discovered the haughtiness of security. In adversity, you have not abandoned yourself to presumptuousness; in prosperity, you have not murmured and repined. In youth, you have not exhibited the faults of age; and in age, you have not retained the follies of youth. Wonderful proficiency in the spirit of a Christian!

My friends, it is impossible for any man, who has a proper sense of the consistency and uniformity of the religious character, to allow himself in such comparisons. He hopes that God, who knows his temptations and trials, will make a gracious allowance for his peculiar defect; but, as for himself, he makes no allowance. He struggles most against the sins to which he is most exposed; sensible that "whosoever offendeth in one point is guilty of all," and that he is not a real Christian, who allows himself

deliberately in any course of omission or commission, which he has reason to think God's will requires.

Of the same kind are those inconsistencies which we see in men who substitute a temporary for a regular obedience. Some men have seasons of tenderness and compunction. They make resolutions, the effect of which lasts through a period either of affliction, anxiety, or bereavement; but they relapse into their former courses, and attempt to derive merit from their temporary reformation. There are others, who are afraid of great sins, and behave well in any very important crisis of life, whose habitual temper is unamiable and unchristian. Most men can do right, when the eyes of the world are invited to observe them. They then decide nobly, generously, and righteously; but would you know whether they have the spirit and power of religion, follow them to their families, to the minute and trivial concerns of life, and then you may learn best their true worth and their real defects.

But this subject is extremely copious, and I must forbear any further remarks.

My hearers, I have thus endeavored, from the solemn words of our Savior, "No man can serve two masters," to give you some idea of the consistency and uniformity of the Christian character, and to correct that common evasion, with which we so often delude ourselves, that perfection is not the lot of humanity. Perfection and consistency are two different attainments. The former is the point to which we must be continually aiming; the other is that which we must have reached, before we can lay claim to the character of real Christians. The distinction is sufficiently obvious. The perfect Christian is one who never sins; the consistent Christian is one who allows himself in

no sin, but, being governed supremely by the principles of his religion, grows in grace and knowledge, and, by a diligent use of the means of religion, advances steadily in the divine life.

My hearers, we have a great work before us, and a day of trial and retribution awaits us. He, who is seriously engaged in this great work, cannot hope to be received and accepted by his God, unless he has given him his heart. "No man can serve two masters." "Choose you," then, "this day, whom you will serve." For, behold, the time is coming, when He, who deserves all we can give him of affection and obedience, will appear as our Judge. Then many will come, saying, Lord, have we not passed through life with reputable characters? We have not outraged thine authority, nor failed to respect the forms of thy religion. Then will he say unto them, Ye have had no faith in my name, no fear of God before your eyes, but ye have loved the praise of men more than the praise of God; verily, I say unto you, ye have had your reward.

Then will others come, saying, Lord, thou desirest not sacrifice, else would we give it; we have not paid the tithe of mint, anise, and cummin; but we have observed the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and fidelity. Then will the Judge answer and say unto them, These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the others undone. Ye have said, What is the Almighty, that we should serve him, and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him? I know you that ye have not the love of God in you.

Then others will come, saying, Lord, behold our charities. When I saw the hungry, I fed them; the sick, and in prison, I visited them; I have abstained from all appearance

of evil. Behold my frequent resolutions, my public sacrifices, my zeal for thy cause, my care of my family, my humility, my poverty, or my reputation and my friends. Then will the King answer and say to one, I know thy works, thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. To another, Pure religion before God, the Father, is not only to visit the fatherless and widows, but to keep thyself unspotted from the world. To another, What shall I do unto thee? for thy goodness is as the morning cloud and the evening dew, which soon passeth away. To another, To whom much has been given, of him much will be required.

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, — what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

SERMON XII.

PSALM CXIX. 96.

THY COMMANDMENT IS EXCEEDING BROAD.

"I HAVE seen," says the Psalmist, "an end of all perfection;" the glory of human greatness vanishes; the objects of human pursuit disappoint us; the wonders of nature and art decay; and what we call moral perfection, as it is exhibited in human character, is either frail, defective, or delusive; but "thy commandment," O God, "is exceeding broad."

The opposition between the two parallel portions of the verse may not, at first, be understood. The meaning, undoubtedly, is, of that, which is perfect in human estimation, we soon find a limit, but the wisdom and perfection of thy law who can represent? This comprehensive law of goodness, which appeared to the Psalmist so "exceeding broad," is more clearly defined and illustrated in the New Testament; and, if there were nothing else to prove the divine origin of Christ's religion, the very nature of his moral precepts would, perhaps, be sufficient. Of the evangelical morality it may be truly said, that it cannot be improved. The world had before known nothing like it, as a whole; and it would be, perhaps, impossible to collect all its precepts, even if we were permitted to search, and select, here and there, a maxim or a sentiment from all the works

of all the ancients. It is distinguished for the grandeur and efficacy of its sanctions, which lay hold on eternity to come; for the restraints which it lays on the heart, the source of action; and for its elevating, purifying, and spiritualizing influence. In short, the instructions of Christ partake of the divinity of their author; the spirit, which "descended like a dove, and rested upon him," breathes in every line which he has left us.

When we consider the vast extent of the Christian morality, and compare it with the inadequate conceptions of duty entertained by many Christians, it may be well thought surprising, that we should have discovered so much more solicitude to erect standards of faith than standards of practice. We have guarded the articles of our belief against invasion or evasion, by every possible barrier; and have considered the church in danger, when the perfection of these formularies has been doubted or denied. But no church has thought it equally necessary to take care of its system of duties. Diversity of sentiment on the subject of practice has been thought a less dangerous heresy; and a church cannot be shown in ecclesiastical history, which has established a creed in morals.

Whence this strange inconsistency in our zeal? Is it because the intentions of Scripture are more plain on this subject than on articles of faith? Or is it because our love of power is more flattered by subjecting other men to the standard of our speculations than by guarding them from mistaking their duty?

Whatever answer may be given to these questions, I think no man, who makes the Scriptures his study, need be more surprised or concerned at the variety of doctrines, which men have attempted to draw from them, than at the

imperfect notions, which still exist, on the subject of duty. The cause of this diversity is to be sought, not in the obscurity of our Savior's precepts, — for, in general, their spirit cannot be mistaken, — but in our ignorance of ourselves, in our slavish subjection to custom and fashion, in our thoughtless lives, and, above all, in the great reluctance, which every man feels, to suffer the standard of duty to be raised much higher than the point to which he has himself attained.

I shall devote this discourse to an inquiry into the inadequate conceptions, which prevail, as to the extent of the divine law. The subject naturally divides itself into the four grand points, of justice, benevolence, purity, and piety. We shall consider the prevailing defects of our moral sentiments on each of these branches of the Christian law.

Upon the subject, then, of justice, — upon which, if on any branch of morals, we may suppose men to entertain accurate ideas, because it is intimately connected with all their business and with all their labors, — it will be found that few of us have either very exact, comprehensive, or evangelical conceptions.

It is a general sentiment in society, that, if a man of business observes a common honesty in his negotiations, if he is true to his word, faithful in his engagements, and punctual in his appointments, it is not only as much as we, but as God has a right to expect. Instances of deliberate, high-handed fraud excite, it is true, a temporary indignation; but the awakened sensibility too soon subsides; the knowledge of successful dishonesty seems rather to prepare us better for the next example; and often is the most deliberate injustice covered over, at last, by forms and the

show of precedent, and men consent to enjoy, all their lives, the fruits of the very wickedness they have execrated.

But, after all, my friends, is the bare observance of the laws, in commercial transactions, the extent of the Christian duty of justice? There is a sense of equity in a man of Christian principles, which mere law cannot prescribe, and to which custom does not always reach. There is a sense of right, which can neither be inspired nor supported by a common regard to reputation; and a high sense of duty, which asks only the eye of God for its witness and reward.

What do we think, also, of the great duty of restitution, in innumerable cases which the laws and customs of society hardly contemplate? If we have either designedly or undesignedly wronged our brother, it is our duty to make him compensation, even in cases where he is ignorant of his loss, in others where he does not demand it, in many where he cannot require it by any positive compact, and in many more where there is no common tribunal, to which we may appeal, to decide the proper measure of retribution.

There are some cases of injury known only to God and ourselves; there are others, where the world would smile at us, if we felt bound to redress them. There are cases in which, though we are entirely guiltless in the sight of God, yet we may become guilty by withholding that compensation, which nothing but a tender conscience, or, if you choose to call it so, a delicate sense of honor, knows how to estimate.

Again; are there not some who venture to propagate, or, at least, not to contradict, a false report, by which, for

the sake of gain, they may practise on the credulity of the public? Are there not those who will encounter risks, undertake adventures, and hazard speculations, to which their means are entirely inadequate? and this, too, with the prospect before them, not merely of their own ruin, but of the ruin of others, to whose kindness they have been indebted, and whose interests they have no right to endanger?

But there is another more extensive branch of justice, upon which there prevails an astonishing insensibility in the minds even of honest men; I mean justice to the reputation of others. We enjoy the benefits of society only on condition of preserving its rights; and in every civilized country justice is due to every man's character, whether we are his friend or his enemy. We are not only to render "tribute to whom tribute is due," but "honor to whom honor." Every man has a right to our good opinion, till he has forfeited it. Every man has a right to have his character as inviolate as his property, even when he cannot protect it by positive laws. Whatever be the principles which he is supposed to entertain, the amount of his importance in society, or the relation in which he stands to ourselves, he has a claim for justice to his character on every individual in the community. I speak not now of charity, but of justice. He has a right to expect that no doubtful or malicious insinuations should obtain that currency which is often given them in inconsiderate conversation. For not only are we injurious by the direct propagation of unjust reports, but we have not even a right to give them countenance in our more private and confidential intercourse. Nay, more; the sufferer, whatever be his rank or consequence, has a right to demand of us that we

do him not the injustice to be predisposed to believe them. We see, then, that this extensive law of justice has a bearing on the estimates which we secretly form of the characters of others. We are really unjust, when we suffer any unfounded prejudice to obscure our sense of another's merits. We are unjust, when we conceal the good qualities of an enemy or a rival, or when we labor to put an unfavorable construction on his apparent excellences. In this view of the extensive justice which we owe to each other, how are our daily offences multiplied! How often do cruel calumnies circulate among us, wasting the reputation of men, when they are entirely ignorant and entirely undeserving of their loss! How often do we refuse men the least share in our estimation, for no other reason than because they do not belong to our circle, or follow in our train! How careless are we of retrieving the mischiefs we have done to others by our inconsideration, and how slow are we to remove the false impressions which we have undesignedly given!

Again; it should not be forgotten, that gratitude is also a part of justice, and that we should be as scrupulous of rendering kindness for kindness as of discharging our just debts, or of securing our lawful dues. On the other hand, do I exaggerate the state of opinion, when I say that our notions of the extent of the divine law are so defective that we are ready to think that fraud will authorize fraud, deception merit deception, and neglect give room for neglect and calumny? We have only to turn our thoughts upon our own consciences, to find how inadequate is our sense of justice, and how narrow the common definitions of honesty. "Thy commandment," O God, "is exceeding broad;" thy justice reacheth unto the clouds.

The second great article of morals, upon which our conceptions are much more imperfect than they ought to be, is the duty of benevolence. This is a branch of duty more easy to praise than to practise; and, not only so, it is a portion of character, in which we are most sensible to the defects of others, and most exorbitant in our demands upon those who have it in their power to be more beneficent than ourselves. And yet, notwithstanding all this sensibility upon the subject of benevolence, though it is the topic of universal praise, the virtue upon which men, who have no other, are most disposed to descant, and though it is no less the subject of our Savior's instructions than of the popular philosophy, perhaps we shall be found, upon examination, to entertain very inadequate ideas of its real obligations.

The commandment, of doing to others as we would have them do to us, "is exceeding broad." Let us compare it, not with the practice of mankind, but with the prevailing maxims which we frequently hear in society. Thus, he may pass for a benevolent man, who relieves the poor, when they importune him, who contributes his share to a popular subscription, who takes care of his destitute relations, and provides, perhaps, for some who have no claims upon his kindness, except the common rights of humanity in distress. It is a common observation, with those who would be shocked to be thought deficient in benevolence, that charity begins at home. True, it does; but there it never terminates. It is the quality of true benevolence, to expand itself constantly; and, when it is contracted by necessity into a smaller circle, it suffers a compression which gives the spirit of doing good a greater vigor.

The great defect in our conceptions of benevolence is,

that we confine it too much to the duty of alms-giving, or pecuniary bounty. Bounty to the poor will neither atone for the iniquitous acquisition of wealth, nor excuse us from the necessity of cultivating an habitual disposition of benevolence. Occasional or long continued attention to particular persons will not atone for a constant churlishness of temper to others, nor will it compensate for a hard, unyielding character in business, or for an habitual selfishness and cool neglect of others' accommodation.

The notions, which the apostles entertained of this virtue, we find in the address of Peter to the man at the porch of the temple, before he healed him: "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, give I unto thee." There is hardly anything which, in some cases, more clearly evinces a defect of benevolence than the giving of money, when it is done to silence importunity, or to excuse us from the trouble of ascertaining the real wants of the distressed, and the best mode of relieving them.

We see in the life of our blessed Lord, who had no earthly possessions, the spirit of doing good, in all its extent and activity. You, who have so much in your power to do, have you ever thought of this bright example of generosity without alms-giving, relief without money, effectual benevolence without influence, character, or reputation, and can you think that the Christian law of benevolence is completely answered by the giving of alms? If I may be permitted to inquire into your practical persuasions upon this subject, I would ask you, in the first place, is beneficence truly agreeable to you? Is it your meat and your drink, to coöperate with your Father in heaven in the grand object of human happiness? Are not your benefactions sometimes extorted from you through fear of shame,

or are you often grieved that you cannot do more? Are you satisfied, from year to year, with a particular measure of doing good, though your possessions, in the mean time, may have prodigiously increased, and your power of serving mankind have greatly extended?

Again; have you a practical persuasion of your duty to others, as a man of influence, knowledge, power, and notoriety, as well as wealth? Do you consider how much you ought to surrender of your personal accommodation to the welfare of others? that many, whom your bounty would not profit, your knowledge may assist, your advice may serve, your encouragement may stimulate, your patronage may establish, your praises may inspire, your example may incalculably serve? Have you considered that it is a duty of benevolence, not merely to lend your good offices, when they are solicited, but to anticipate applications, to meet the advances of the timid, to inquire into the circumstances of the distressed, and to rejoice as much in any newly discovered opportunity of doing good as in a new acquisition? Have you considered that he, who is not active in his benevolence, who imparts only what is obtained from him by direct application, is, of all men, the most prejudicial to the growth of a spirit of benevolence, because he gains the character of a benevolent man, without imparting any of the warmth and spirit of that blessed quality? Such a man gives no life to the generosity of the community; he does no more good than the precise amount of his benefaction produces.

Again; the great law of Christian benevolence includes every object within its reach, enemies, not less than friends; the distant, as well as the near; strangers, as well as familiar acquaintance. It does not suffer us to give them

up, when many are willing to retire and be forgotten. Christian benevolence forbids our adopting the common profession. Though such an one is my enemy, I would relieve him from distress, if he came in my way; but Christian benevolence requires every man to seek for reconciliation, where he has any hope of obtaining it; to rejoice in all the happiness which he sees innocently enjoyed by his enemies; to contribute his share to the comfort and good-humor of society, even when his vanity is sometimes mortified, and his feelings wounded. In short, it is every man's duty to consider how much more is necessary to benevolence than mere bounty or compassion, and that the good-will, which will make no sacrifice, is little more than a reputable selfishness.

Finally, my friends, is that a genuine spirit of benevolence, which does not extend itself to the source of all the misery in the world, and evinces no interest in the moral condition and everlasting welfare of others? Does the law of Christian benevolence allow us to be satisfied with relieving misery, when we take no pains to prevent vice? Has he any claim to the character of a man of real benevolence, who encourages, by his example or his neglect, that depravity in the community, which terminates, at last, in the very distress which he is prompt to relieve? Can any sympathy with affliction, any nobleness of temper, any boasted instances of generosity, any instinct of kindness, atone for an indifference to the moral and religious character of those with whom we are connected, or for habits of vice, which destroy all that is valuable in human life? Talk not, then, my friends, of benevolence without principle, of compassion which has no object but that of relieving visible distress, of a generous temper which has

no feeling for the depravity and crimes of mankind. That is not benevolence, which will make no sacrifices for the general good. The benevolence of the gospel is active, as well as passive; comprehensive, pure, peaceful, and gentle.

The next branch of Christian virtue, which we shall consider, is the great law of purity; not because we imagine it to be that which is most frequently transgressed, but because it is one which is very seldom treated with the seriousness it deserves. "Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, is," not only "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," but "to keep one's self unspotted from the world." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

From these expressions you cannot fail to understand that purity does not consist merely in laying a restraint here and there, where we are most exposed, nor in avoiding some disreputable spots of character; but purity of heart is that white robe which envelops all the virtues of the character, a robe so white and delicate that it may be stained no less easily from within than from without.

But, before we consider the extent of this law of purity, let us express our grief and astonishment, that any should be found, in a Christian community, and professing to regard the gospel as their rule of morals, who yet, in making up their judgment, or in regulating their treatment of others, hardly take the consideration of purity into their estimate of character. With all our professions of Christianity, we have yet chosen, against the very spirit and letter of God's laws, to make an unauthorized distinction between sins which may be practised with and without the loss of reputation. Are there not sins, which, if God is true, will cast

a man away from his presence, which yet are far from shutting him out of the esteem of man?

Of that infinite variety of characters, of which society is composed, one of the most common is that of the man who allows himself in a single favorite vice. He finds that there are sins which he may practise with security in secret, and that, even if they are known within his favorite circle, he loses nothing of his good estimation. There, if, indeed, any excuse is expected of him, he does not deny his constitutional infirmity. To the better part of society he is willing to atone for it in some other way. To himself he pleads the force of temptation, or even of habit; yet he will take care to be as inoffensive, and always as honorable, as possible, in his indulgences. Perhaps he even ventures to think that he does no injury to society, that his character, on the whole, is not materially defective. Does he ever think of God? "Perhaps even God will not be strict in condemning me!"

On the whole, he is entirely persuaded that he is not worse than the majority; nay, he is inclined to believe, that, with this single exception, as he dares to regard it, he is a better man than his more conscientious neighbor, who, without any visible criminality, is certainly not so amiable, nor so generous, nor so honorable as himself. Men of this character are sometimes capable of acts of great generosity, resorting to beneficence as a species of equivalent for a strictly pure and virtuous life; as if they could indulge a favorite sin, at the price of practising a virtue which, in its common acceptation, is the least difficult and the most popular of all the virtues.

In the character, we have now drawn, we find the danger of taking our estimate of any from the maxims of the

world. To men of this description what is that language of the gospel, which we presume they are not yet hardy enough to disdain? What is the language of that strict reason, which, if they hear not from their consciences, they must hear, at last, from their Judge? "He, that keeps the whole law, and yet offends in one point, is guilty of all." He has no true principle of virtue, no sincere obedience to the will of God. His fair show of popular qualities is a show of rotten fruit. In the sight of God he is radically corrupt. He is criminal, he is in the path to ruin, though, in his own estimation, he has narrowed it to a single sin. He is surely working out his own destruction, though singly, secretly, and honorably. The world kindly calls him his own enemy; he is not only his own enemy, he is man's, he is God's; because he is attempting a union of irreconcilable qualities, of virtues and vices which the day of retribution will show him that even God's omnipotence cannot reconcile.

My Christian hearers, remember this. The man, who, in the language of the world, has only one vice, but many virtues, has, in religious strictness, no virtues at all. Do not misunderstand. The man, who deliberately allows himself in any sin which God, and reason, and Christianity forbid, has, in fact, no true and sincere principles. He may possess some amiable dispositions, but, really, he has no morals. However the thoughtless or the irreligious world may excuse or flatter him, as a man of an excellent heart, — because, instead of being guilty of theft, or fraud, or some other unpopular crime, he only happens to be the slave of a more fashionable vice, — in the sight of God, these distinctions are neither made nor admitted; and would to God, they were never admitted in society!

If we proceed to inquire into the notions of purity, which are entertained by men who do not allow themselves in habitual transgressions of positive laws, I fear we shall find much indistinctness. It is impossible to avoid this conclusion, where we observe, as we sometimes may, that the tongue will take a license denied to the actions. Let us follow out our train of thoughts, and we shall often find them traversing ground which is dangerous or corrupting. There is no sin in this, if these thoughts are not encouraged, if they are banished and never recalled. But is it true, that any great compunction ever follows these wanderings of the fancy, which are often the beginnings of irretrievable disorder? What notions can they have of the obligations of purity, who will expose themselves to temptations, because they can easily resist them? What notions of purity can they have, who will not only drink in, themselves, but proffer to others, the poison of licentious thoughts, and think that all is well? From this low sense of purity, which satisfies the world, we turn to the gospel of Christ, that we may breathe a purer air.

Now, in the view of Jesus, the opposite of purity is every species of internal defilement. In his gospel we learn that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." There we find that the seat of impurity is in the affections; and, till these are purified, the inner chambers of the mind remain the scene of vices of which the world knows nothing. There we learn that the mere control of the actions is not only insufficient, but that it has been always unsuccessful. There, too, we understand that the principal design of our Savior's exhortations on the subject of purity is, to direct our attention to the thoughts, in contradistinc-

tion to the actions, which are external. It is only when we think of this, that we can understand the full force of such injunctions as these: "Let us purify ourselves from all corruption of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God": "Put off the old man, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." We can understand by these expressions, however metaphorical, nothing less than this, that the heart must be divested of all those inclinations which, whether they break out into action or not, are inconsistent with that purity of which our Savior has left us an example, and to preserve which we are solemnly enjoined.

Among the innumerable proofs of the divinity of everything relating to Jesus and Christianity, the stress laid upon the regulation of the thoughts is admirable and peculiar. With our Savior, and with him only, thought is everything. "He knew what was in man;" and he does not merely recommend this restraint, or propose it as a greater degree of perfection, but he declares it, in the very first instance, essential. Therefore "keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

The fourth division now remains, in which we proposed to examine some of the prevailing notions with regard to piety; not with a view of showing the want of it in the world, but of correcting the notions which are entertained of this branch of Christian duty.

By piety is here meant, not the whole of a Christian character, sometimes expressed by the word "godliness," but that branch of duty, which has God more immediately for its object. It is, undoubtedly, not only a duty, but of all duty the most valuable part. For that disposition to-

wards God, which leads to the performance of all other duties, is not only necessary to the perfection, but even to the existence, of steadfast virtue and Christian morality.

There are those who have no reference in their conduct to God's will, no affections of which God is the object. No man can doubt this, who considers, that, among the higher classes, the law of honor has, in many cases, superseded the law of God; and there are thousands who, when they think at all of the moral character of their actions, ask no other question than, How will this appear, what will be thought of it? A great portion of those in humble life derive their moral ideas from the law of the land; and, with them, that is right which does not expose them to punishment. There is, however, another class, of refined and delicate spirits of great sensibility, who seem to have a love of virtue, but whose notion of it seems, at last, to resolve itself into a refined sentiment or taste; and there is a still more numerous and reflecting class, of those who reduce all their duty into present utility, and attempt to build up a system of morals unconnected with religion, and without reference to the will of God.

But we must be more particular. In the first place, it cannot fail to have been remarked by you, that there are many very reputable and honest men, who do not consider the duties of piety as essential parts of a good character. Now, if we admit that there s a God, who made us and supports us, and if we admit, too, that man is capable of knowing, serving, and loving this God, it must appear to every man who thinks, that he must be a monster, who has no sentiments of piety. You cannot but acknowledge, that, where the greatest excellence exists, the highest ven-

eration is due; and that to him to whom we are most obliged, and on whom we are most dependent, we owe the highest gratitude and reverence. We are moral and rational creatures; and, constituted as we are, what can be proved to be a duty, if this cannot, that we should cultivate the best affections towards God, reverencing him as the greatest, submitting to him as the wisest, loving and imitating him as the best of beings? But this is piety. And yet there are men who consider piety as not essential to a good character. Suppose we should choose to say that love and obedience to parents were no part of morals, and that a man might be a very good man, who neglected and disobeyed the authors of his existence. Now this would be an inconsiderable error, compared with the other, inasmuch as God is everything to us, and all our other obligations are united and combined in our duty to him. We object not to morality. Would to God there were more, and higher, and purer, and better! But we know of no morality among rational men, among Christians, that is not built upon the sense of duty to God. We may talk of utility, of prudence, of pleasure, of honesty, and beneficence; but without piety, the soul, the life of virtue, is absent, and in the day of trial this fair and splendid structure will fail. When the rains and the floods descend, and beat on this building, it will fall, for it is founded upon the sand.

In the second place, it seems to be a common opinion, that piety is a quality to be found only in particular constitutions, a disposition dispensed to some and denied to others, one of those diversities in taste and temper, which make a variety, indeed, in life, but that some men are not gifted with it, and it is not to be expected of them.

Will you acknowledge, then, that piety is unnatural to you? Do you know that piety means an affection of the mind to the greatest and worthiest Being in nature? a grateful feeling towards the best Friend, a trust in his wise and kind protection, a confidence in his paternal government, a submission to his will, a desire of his esteem, and a humble expectation of happiness from his favor? Do you know God? and are you ready to say that your minds are so formed that you have no veneration or love for such a character? Will you plead that piety is unnatural to you? God will not admit this plea. God, who knows that he has laid in the constitution of human nature a foundation for all those affections of the soul, which constitute piety, will not admit of this extenuation.

This mistake, no doubt, arises, in some degree, from our judging of the nature of true piety from the form which it takes in particular tempers. All good affections are different in different minds. For example, the friendship of some men is strong and quiet; of others, ardent. The humanity of some is melting and tender; of others, active and constant, but calm. So it is with piety. The only thing of consequence is, that it be sincere, real, habitual, possessing the heart, keeping God in view in all the interests of our lives, and doing everything with reference to him. The man, who is willing to admit that he has no dispositions of this kind towards God, virtually admits that he has no good dispositions. He would be ashamed to say that he was incapable of entering into the affections and practising the duties of a good subject, friend, or son. If, then, he is willing to admit that he has no disposition to piety, he, in fact, excites the suspicion, and justly, too, that he is pursuing some indulgences, and the slave of some affec-

tions, which are at enmity with God, and with which he is afraid to present himself before God. The language of his heart is, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." This, then, is a mistake which deserves our most serious consideration.

There exists, however, a third proof of the deficiency of our notions on the subject of piety, and this is, the sentiment so often professed even by good and exemplary men, that they attend upon the public worship of God for the sake of setting an example. Be not surprised or offended that this language is adduced as a proof of the incompetency of our religious notions. Let this consideration of example have all the weight which it deserves; but, in the name of God, whom we profess to worship on this spot, let it not usurp the place of those affections towards him, which constitute true religion. Whenever our acts of devotion, or any other duties of piety, are observed merely for the sake of example, the ground of action is unsubstantial. If there is no reason for a duty, beside the example, there is, in truth, no reason for it at all. This language would lead to this most absurd conclusion, that, if every one were entirely disposed to do his duty, and had no need of encouragement from the example of others, there would be no reason left for any duty; in other words, we should have no duties to perform.

In truth, if example were the only reason for the duties of piety, or for religious services, what support have they? None. Our conclusion from this reasoning, then, is, not that it is unlawful to admit this consideration, but that it is dangerous and wicked to allow that, which is only secondary and consequential, to shut out from our thoughts the true foundation of piety towards God. If this is the only mo-

tive for the observance of religious services, their religious quality has disappeared, their very life has vanished. Let us not say that we come here to pray. We do not; we come here for the sake of example. Proud man! idle spectator of this scene! you vouchsafe your presence in these assemblies for the benefit of others, for the edification of the people. Have you, then, no sins to deplore, no mercies to acknowledge, no pardon to entreat?

Piety, my Christian hearers, can spring from nothing but itself, its own sentiment and principle, the sentiment of gratitude, reverence, and love towards God, the principle of obedience to his will, as the foundation of all Christian virtue and true morality. Our acts of piety are altogether defective, in motive and in practice, when we do not consider our own interests involved in them, when we do not feel them to be our own particular duty.

Have we duly thought of this subject? Is private and public devotion really a duty which every rational creature owes to God, or is it only a habit which has grown up we know not how, from a time we know not when? Do we bear in mind that no religious services can be effectual, either with God or with ourselves, in which the affections are not engaged? If we never experience that warm and virtuous energy which devotion inspires, the consolation it imparts, and the sympathy which social worship ought to awaken, we do not worship in spirit and in truth. If these are our sentiments and feelings, our piety will be an example to others, and yet our own. It will be public, and yet personal. It will be what Christ would have it, when he said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." The glory of God is the termination of the precept;

and, if we keep this in view, our example will have all the value which sincerity and piety can give it.

My Christian hearers, let us not forget that our character is utterly defective and incomplete without piety. The distinguishing service, which Christianity has done for the world, is, to bring us to the knowledge, love, and imitation of the true God. We talk, indeed, of the morality of the New Testament, we commend its virtuous precepts. But, if we search the records of the heathen world, we shall find many great and good men, who have made extraordinary advances in all that is virtuous, in justice, temperance, and beneficence; but the best and wisest of them made no approaches towards the piety of the gospel. Let us not forget, then, that, as far as we are deficient in this blessed temper of devotion, so far do we fall short of the spirit of Christianity, the glory and distinction of a Christian.

If there was ever a person on earth, who, in consequence of the perfection of every other virtue, might plead an exemption from this of piety, it was Jesus Christ. But in him this principle was the very origin and substance of all his excellences. Every movement of his heart, every act of his life, was to please God. It was this which gave purity, fortitude, cheerfulness, consistency to everything in his character. He honored and worshipped his heavenly Father. He loved him, and delighted to hold constant communion with the Father of his spirit. If, then, we possessed this principle, how easy and delightful would be our duty! We should, from a principle of gratitude, observe the ordinances of the gospel, and find happiness in all the exercises of a holy and merciful religion. God would be in all our thoughts, and whatsoever we did, we should "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

SERMON XIII.

PSALM IV. 6.

THERE BE MANY THAT SAY, WHO WILL SHOW US ANY GOOD?

IT is a melancholy consideration, that this has been the common inquiry of men ever since the world was made, and that so few of them seem to have attained to anything like permanent happiness. How few are there in the world, who, if you ask them the plain and simple question, Are you happy? would answer, spontaneously, that they were! How busy are men in the pursuit of this common good! How numerous and opposite are the courses which they take! How frequent and miserable are the countenances of the discontented! Philosophers have been speculating, in all ages, upon the supreme good; men have been making every imaginable variety of experiment; teachers have given innumerable lessons upon this most difficult, yet most simple, of arts; in fine, God has, more than once, interposed to assist us in our progress, and offers us every encouragement to the attainment of this great end; and yet how unsatisfied are we, how grossly have we been disappointed in the past, how painfully solicitous are we for the future!

It shall be my present object, to inquire, why there is not more happiness among mankind; and, in order to this, I

shall endeavor to lay open some of the most common mistakes upon the subject.

The first mistake, which is too common, especially among those who have experienced many trials and difficulties in life, is, that happiness is to be found in rest. Ask those, who are so busy in the active pursuits of life, to what they look forward with such ardent expectations, and they will tell you that they are toiling for repose. They look with envy upon the condition of that man who, in the language of the world, has nothing to do but enjoy himself. They look upon exertion as a species of servitude, as if he were the only independent man, who is reposing upon his laurels or his gains. But, as has been pointedly observed, that man is most restless who is most at rest. Nothing is so hard as the pillow of perpetual indolence; nothing so oppressive as the stagnant, unelastic air of entire inactivity. The truth is, that the mind, which is not constantly directed to something exterior, preys upon itself. The bedridden intellect pines away in atrophy and the everlasting uneasiness of sloth. Most of those, who have nothing to do, commonly do nothing, or do wrong; and it is necessary to have advanced much further than most of us have, in the work of our intellectual perfection, to be able to relinquish, without great misery, the career of active exertion.

A second mistake upon the subject of happiness is, that it is to be found in prosperity. The truth is, that, of the objects of human acquisition, very few are, beyond a certain limit, even the means of happiness. We are perpetually making this mistake in respect to riches, and confounding two things completely distinct; that is, property and happiness. Ask those, I pray you, who have accumulated

the most enormous fortunes, whether they have ever yet been able to increase their possessions faster than their wants. It is, indeed, a trite maxim, that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth;" yet, common as it is, it would seem as if it were a doubtful truth, which remains to be established. For, when we look at those above us, and find that they are able to supply those wants to which we, in our actual situation, are most sensible, it is natural to conclude that they are happy; because we should be happy, if we could remove, as they can, our most pressing needs. We do not consider, that, the higher we ascend, and the wider we can see, the more we desire; and it is often true, that, the more extensive our horizon, the more barren appears the soil immediately around us. These are all common truths; but, trite as they are, allow me to repeat, that he, who can command everything, will soon find that he must want something, he knows not what, which he cannot command. It is true, the rich man can enjoy more; but, on the other hand, he can endure less. He now dares to envy the man whom he once only looked up to with hopeless admiration. He finds that the pleasures, which he once enjoyed with exquisite satisfaction, have now strangely lost all their relish, and that there is not so much happiness in possession as there was in expectation. There is a strange charm in the idea of property. We think the enjoyment of any good is infinitely heightened by the consciousness that it is our own. These little words exercise a powerful spell over our judgments. And yet how many thousands are there, who, as soon as they are able to say of anything, in truth, "This is mine," lose, at once, all their interest in it, and strangely neglect sources of enjoyment, which, when they possessed them not, they thought inexhaustible!

A third mistake on this subject, not less unfortunate than either of the preceding, consists in supposing that happiness is to be found in perpetual excitement. Hence thousands always confound pleasure with mirth, and think nothing tolerable which is not exquisite. Others think nothing pleasant which is not riotous, nothing interesting which is not boisterous, nothing satisfactory which is not intoxicating. It is this mistake which leads so many through the ever shifting varieties of dissipation, when what ought to be only an occasional recreation is made necessary to common comfort, and all satisfaction is lost in the wearisome chase after novelty.

Others, from the same diseased fancy, cannot confine themselves to a single spot. They rove continually after new objects of imagination, taste, and knowledge. They cannot endure home-born pleasures, and every-day enjoyments. Everything little seems to them insignificant, everything permanent seems to them tedious. All these mistaken pursuers of good are, sooner or later, the prey of excessive ennui. Having been always gay, they are never contented ; always delighted, they are never tranquil. Having been happy only in the excitement of society, they are miserable when alone. Old age proves to such beings, if they ever reach it, a most oppressive condition. Deluded as they have been with the notion, that happiness consists in perpetual excitement, in great events, strong feelings, continual novelties, and vivid pleasures, they sink into dejection, indolence, melancholy, and become weary of life before it is time for them to leave the scene of human action and enjoyment.

A fourth mistake in relation to happiness is, that we make our provision exclusively for the present world. We

do not take into view the whole of our existence ; and, of course, as soon as the season of activity is over, and we are so near the term of human life that we are compelled, however reluctantly, to think of the world which is to come, we are filled with apprehensions of indistinct calamity, and thus the remnant of life is embittered. We find ourselves in the situation of beings who are about to enter, naked and unfriended, into a new condition of existence. God has so constituted the nature of our happiness that it will ever be impossible to attain to the full enjoyment even of this life, without taking into our view the life to come; for, as long as there remains in any mind an apprehension, that it may exist hereafter, that mind can never be at ease, till it is conscious of possessing some sources of happiness, which this change of residence cannot impair. In comparison with eternity, what consolation is it, to have laid up treasures here for ten, or for ten thousand years ? What is the comfort of being " clothed in purple and fine linen," and of " faring sumptuously every day " ? No wonder he is never happy who thinks, whenever he reflects at all, that death will cut him off, at once, from all that he has been accustomed to call life ; that the pleasures of the palate will no more reach the taste, the eye will no more indulge itself in the contemplation of fine forms, the organ of hearing will be no longer fed with the music of sweet sounds, and, every object of exterior employment at once struck out of his reach, he will be left with nothing but the intrinsic possessions of the mind and heart,— and of these how small and worthless will be found the inventory !

Such, then, are the dreary consequences of having made no provision for any life but the present. It proves to you, that, to be permanently happy, we must extend our views,

enlarge the sphere of our vision, the nature of our enjoyments, and take into consideration the whole of our existence. Especially remember that this world is but the infancy of our being. Our schemes of happiness, which extend no further than this life, are miserably defective. It is as if the child were to lay up a vast repository of toys and sweetmeats, to feed and to amuse him, when he arrives at man's estate. It is as if he were to collect a sumptuous wardrobe, for his future life, of vestments adapted to his boyish stature.

With all these sources of mistake, is it surprising, that so few men are happy? Let us acknowledge that we have been mistaken. Let us instantly endeavor to correct our misconceptions. Let us confess that we have taken the most partial views of human life; that we have hewn out to ourselves "cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

We will attempt to explore the true sources of Christian and intellectual enjoyment, which brings me to the second division of my discourse, in which I proposed to point out the true and only sources of good, suited to the nature and destination of man.

We will examine this subject in reference to four circumstances of mind and character, which have the most extensive influence on human happiness. These are, our habits, our opinions, our imagination, and our temper. You observe that we entirely exclude from this inquiry every consideration of the outward circumstances whether of wealth or of station. Not that these are entirely without influence, but, as we have already said, their influence is much less than is commonly imagined; and it is an influence which may be easily controlled by higher considerations;

an influence which is always diminished or modified by one or other of the mental qualities we enumerate. For there is no place so low to which the meek spirit of religious contentment cannot condescend, and none so high that the horrors of a haunted conscience and the pains of selfishness cannot reach it.

First, as to the influence of our habits upon our happiness, to the young and to parents the inquiry is most interesting; for habits, you well know, are early and permanent. They are not to be put on and off, like our youthful garments. The gay and vain creatures of fashion, the hour they are displeased with themselves in one dress, can change it for another; but the habit of dissipation and unsatisfied vanity is not so easily changed. If, then, you would secure to yourselves all the happiness which habit can effect, accustom yourselves, from infancy, to those occupations and enjoyments only which you can, at all times, command. If you have been early brought up to depend upon circumstances over which you have no control, every change will affect your comfort, and you will find every new situation tear up the roots of your long established pleasures.

The only habits consistent with uninterrupted happiness are those of active exertion directed to benevolent ends. These never become wearisome, never painful. They always afford the mind a sufficient object, and always bring with them their own reward. They are not attended with any of the pains of envy. The satisfaction, they furnish, is not affected by the superior success of others in the same career; and, if, in any particular instance, we fail of success, we have only to submit, with the approbation of our own minds, to the will of Heaven, or to divert our energies into a new direction. For the mind, that is habituated to active

goodness, can never want a sphere of action, and it is a state which never requires relaxation nor tends to disgust and satiety.

That this is the true secret of happiness, as it relates to our habits, is not less confirmed by experience than by the spirit and precepts of Christianity. The character of Jesus, as it is delineated in the Gospels, is a model of benevolent activity. He was always about his Father's business, and always foresaw a sure reward of his labors and sufferings in the increasing happiness of the human race. His mind was always filled with a vast object of good; and, if there was any period, in the course of his laborious life, when he may be supposed to have enjoyed more satisfaction than at others, it must have been soon after he entered on his benevolent employment, and passed rapidly through the cities of Galilee, "healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people," and proclaiming the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. Christians, the true secret of happiness is, employment for the kindest ends and by the most honorable means. Compared to this, our habits of sloth and repose, of regular sensuality, of grasping avarice, of selfish occupation, whether of the imagination or of the senses, is nothing but sure and ultimate discontent. Dare to disregard, then, the common prejudices of the world in determining the system which shall govern your life; and remember, that, however painful any course of duty, especially that of benevolent, disinterested conduct, may be, at first, to our selfish nature, time will render it the source of the highest tranquillity. The habits of a life of truly Christian activity will prove, at last, the only satisfactory objects of retrospection.

In the second place, with respect to the influence of our

opinions upon our happiness, it is important, that we should have those only which give us the most consolatory views of ourselves, of the world around us, and of God. I do not refer here to our merely speculative notions, which have no operation beyond the walls of our studies; but I mean those which take deep root in the mind, and exert an habitual influence upon our conduct. It is supposed, I know, that opinions seldom affect the course of life or the sum of happiness. This may be true with the unreflecting and improvident, who look for nothing in the world but a pasture for their senses, and who never think upon the origin or destination of themselves or others; but in this description I hope few of my hearers are included.

With respect to those opinions, then, which have the most favorable influence upon human happiness, we again find, as on the former head, that revelation comes to our instruction; and, in the light of the gospel, wherever we pass, the desert of the world blooms, on either hand, with hope. Can there be no difference in the happiness of that man who believes that all the rich manifestations of beauty in creation are without an author, all the evils in the world without a controller, and every event produced by a blind, unconscious fatality, and of him who sees at the head of creation a wise and benevolent Providence? Can there be no difference in the reflections of that man who looks upon this world as given up forever to be the spoil of men's wicked passions, and who considers himself placed on the earth merely to struggle for his share among plunderers and fighters for a little temporary provision, and of him who, by the light of the gospel, discerns the slow, but sure, melioration of mankind, and, resting on the promises of Scripture, looks forward to the day, when all God's designs shall be

accomplished, and even this world be changed into a region of peace and joy and Christian perfection? Will there be no difference, also, in the satisfaction of him, whose opinion it is, that evil predominates in the visible creation, and that this world is a state of suffering, and of him who discerns, even here, the preponderance of happiness, and reposes, with satisfaction, on the proofs of divine benevolence, even in this state of human probation? Be assured, my friends, the doctrines of revelation are not less designed to promote our tranquillity than to advance our moral improvement. Especially consider, I beseech you, how important to our peace is that doctrine of Christianity, which assures us of the pardon of sins upon repentance; which presents to us the God, whom we have all offended, in the light of a Father willing to be reconciled; which satisfies us of the ground upon which this pardon is dispensed, and directs us to the mediation of the Son of God. The settlement of human opinion on this single particular may be supposed to operate most powerfully on the sum of general and individual happiness.

As to the comparative effect of different views of Christianity upon the peace of those who entertain them, it is a subject too copious for this occasion. Allow me to suggest, however, that, when any opinions upon this interesting subject produce habitual gloom and misanthropy, the nature of religion must have been misapprehended, and certainly the object of it defeated. In your search, then, after happiness, labor to acquire the most enlarged views of God's character and designs, as declared by revelation; and these, united with the benevolent exertion recommended under the former head, will go far towards securing you all the

happiness which is to be enjoyed in this narow sphere of the existence of an intellectual being.

If, in the third place, we consider the influence of the imagination upon our habitual tranquillity, we shall feel the importance of ascertaining the means of regulating its influence in a manner the most favorable to human happiness. There are many, I know, who derive little either of pleasure or of pain from the imagination; but there are others, to whom it is a source of exquisite distress, giving them the most dreary prospects of futurity, harassing them with the terrors of superstition, or depressing them with the dark uncertainty of skepticism.

We have unintentionally anticipated, under the last head, some observations which belong more properly to this.

When the imagination is extremely lively, either from original constitution or from early cultivation, if it is not made a sweet fountain of felicity, it is usually converted into one of the most distressing sources of misery. Here, too, as before, the religion of Jesus enters, and offers the imagination an inexhaustible store of higher objects. The scenes, which it discloses, beyond the grave, are sublime and consolatory, on the one hand, and fearful and mortally oppressive, on the other. Can you, then, whose minds are formed to derive much happiness from remote anticipations, hesitate, a moment, to secure the favorable influence of the Christian's prospect of felicity? "My peace," says our Savior to his disciples, "I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." This is most true, my Christian friends; and all the imaginable happiness, which a mere philosopher can derive from the tranquillity with which he may be able to look forward to the events of to-

morrow, or even the remainder of his days, is less than nothing, in the estimate of human happiness, compared to the joys of a Christian's hope.

But, in the wise ordination of Providence, the overpowering nature of these high anticipations is relieved by their remoteness; and the effect upon the Christian's happiness is not to raise him to perpetual ecstasy, but to keep up in his mind the glow of perpetual hope.

The last circumstance, which we mentioned, as exercising a powerful influence on human happiness, is the temper. We hear truly good men often lamenting, as the bane of their happiness, an instinctive irascibility. It is often, indeed, united with strong affection and benevolence, and often, alas! destroys the happiness which might be expected from a life of active exertion; not so much from the ill effect it produces on the mind as from the misfortunes to which it leads, and these we are not always able to alleviate by the consciousness, that they are entirely undeserved.

Ill-humor is still more unfavorable to happiness than this irascible temper. It commonly originates in self-dissatisfaction, and leads him, who feels it, to refer the causes of his discontent to the imaginary faults of others, and keeps him in a state of perpetual peevishness. I need not, my hearers, tell you, that, to enjoy this life, it is necessary to possess a temper candid to the faults and mistakes of others, disposed to mutual accommodation, not easily provoked, and willing to see everything, that occurs, in the most favorable light. Every one knows that he, whose disposition is most favorable to his own happiness, is most agreeable to others, and that these common qualities of pleasing and being pleased mutually react upon and generate each other.

But, my friends, the Christian doctrine carries this subject of the temper much further, and represents those dispositions as essential to happiness, which we, in our worldly meditations, are too apt to despise, as if they exposed a man to insult or ridicule. If we read the beatitudes in our Savior's sermon on the mount, we shall find the utmost meekness under injuries, the most unbounded forgiveness, represented as the disposition which leads to happiness. We shall find a blessing pronounced upon that compassionate temper which sympathizes with all the miseries of human life, which shares in all the pains it meets, weeps with the weeping, and mourns with the bereaved. Still further does our Savior bless the patient and resigned disposition which bears, without a murmur, the severest afflictions of life, while we are disposed to envy the hardness of the man who can avoid or repulse them.

Ye proud spirits, who cannot endure the humble genius of the religion of Jesus, weigh well this subject of happiness, before you reject this self-denying system. Experience will decide against you, and vindicate the beatitudes of the sermon on the mount. For us Christians it is enough, that Jesus has pronounced such tempers happy.

My friends, I have attempted to lay open to you the true sources of happiness. Follow the stream, and it will bear you away to the full ocean of eternal bliss. Do you again ask, who will show you any good? Jesus, my friends, calls to you from heaven: Whosoever drinketh of the water of life shall never thirst again.

SERMON XIV.

MATTHEW VI. 13.

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.

THE life of every man of established religious principles has been a series of struggles. He has found it far more easy to form than to keep his best resolutions; and he has discovered, also, with alarm, that any course of conduct is far more easily depraved than it is amended. Every moral observer knows, also, that mankind do not agree to approve a character which is to-day wicked and to-morrow good, which is habitually scrupulous in one duty and remiss in another; but we give the title of virtuous to that man only, the sum total of whose habits are uniformly on the side of virtue. This is one of the difficulties which make virtue laborious.

Upon further inquiry, we find that no man's goodness is innate and instinctive, but it is to be acquired by labor, and it is also corruptible by circumstances. Sanctification is progressive. Before habits of virtue can be established, temptations must be resisted, pleasures forborne, pains endured, danger encountered, sacrifices made, false steps recovered, and not a few moments embittered by the tears of penitence and remorse.

Nothing truly great is given to mortals without labor; and think you that moral goodness, that most sublime and

imperishable of human possessions, is the offspring of chance? Fortune may make a man distinguished, but it can never make him great; so nature may make a man innocent and amiable, but never virtuous. Neither is virtue that easy acquisition, that a man may secure it by flight from temptation. It is as if you were to expect to acquire a strong constitution by retiring to ease and sloth in the country, or as if you were to seek for uninterrupted health by flying from infection. No, the strength of a Christian's virtue is the reward of frequent resistance and frequent victories. The child must fall often and hardly, before its step becomes firm.

From these remarks, however, do not understand me to mean, that, where there is no temptation, there can be no virtue. The highest degree of moral excellence is found, we know, in that Being who "cannot be tempted with evil." But, my friends, it has appeared best to this all-wise Being, who made us, to create us an order of beings whose existence here shall be transitory and probationary. He has given us a nature which is capable of perpetual progress towards himself; and he, that can advance, must be also able to retreat. The higher we soar, the stronger will be our flight; but the lower we creep, the darker and more encumbered is our progress. So insecure is our virtue that we cannot stand firm without ascending to a considerable height, and the rewards of virtue are the more sensible, the more difficult they are of attainment. If this is the case, it does not become us, to complain that we were not created angels, with incorruptible natures and instinctive goodness. The rewards of holiness, in such creatures as we are, are the very consequences of its difficulties; just as an estate of the same value is vastly

more estimable to one who has attained it by his industry than to him who inherits it from his ancestors.

But God, who has placed man in what may be called an enemy's country, has provided him with every auxiliary. He has not left him to roll darkly down the torrent of his fate. Precepts, example, promises, threatenings, honor, shame, suffering, reward, and every variety of means and motives, are provided, from the first hour that the mind discovers any intelligence, to train it up to holiness and heaven. You may choose your weapon from the whole armory of God. In the language of Scripture, you may "gird about your loins with truth," protect your heart "with the breastplate of righteousness," and have "your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Then, with "the shield of faith," "the helmet of salvation," and "the sword of the spirit," you may be expected to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

It shall be my present object, to direct my remarks chiefly to the young and inexperienced. I shall first ascertain the true meaning of the words, "Lead us not into temptation;"—

Secondly, point out some of the peculiar temptations of the young;—

Lastly, offer some motives and considerations which may serve to enlighten and fortify the inexperienced mind.

In reading the phrase, "Lead us not into temptation," it should be remembered, that it was common with the Jews, and, indeed, with all the oriental nations, to refer to the immediate agency of Deity every change in the appearance of nature, and every action of voluntary agents. How far this is philosophically or religiously correct, it is

not necessary here to examine. It is enough for us to know that an apostle has said, "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God." We understand the clause, then, to mean, "Grant, that, in the ordinary course of thy Providence, we may find ourselves in no circumstances which may put our virtue to a trial too severe."

The other petition, "But deliver us from evil," may be variously interpreted. It may mean exemption from temporal and natural calamities, or from immediate danger. Thus interpreted, it will include only the miseries to which humanity is subject; disappointments, losses, sickness, and death. But, as there appears to be an opposition intended between this and the other clause, it is not probable, that deliverance from these natural evils only would be made the antithesis to the dangers of temptation, which are of a nature entirely moral. "Deliver us from the evil one," is another and more literal expression of the original, and follows the first clause with peculiar propriety. We would first pray to be preserved from temptation; but, if our virtue must be placed in perilous circumstances, we pray that it may not yield to the arts of the adversary. Again, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil of it," that is, of temptation; a sense not much remote from the last, and amounting to a request, that trials and temptations may not prove ultimately injurious to our virtue.

My young friends, for to you are these remarks especially directed, allow me to warn you of some of the dangers of temptation, to which you are exposed. It may be observed, to the honor of the world into which you are about to enter, that the character of a deliberate seducer of the young is rarely known. It is that grade of de-

pravity, which the first apostate only has directly and seriously reached. You will soon, however, find men in society, who wish for associates in transgression, that they may palliate their vices to others and to themselves, by the multitude who are engaged in them, and who hope that what is no longer singular may appear no longer criminal. You will find others, who depend indirectly upon the vices of mankind for support, and who secretly encourage the corruption which contributes to their own emolument. In general, however, the instrumentality of others in our temptation is not direct, nor deliberate and voluntary. The unaided allurements of appetite and passion every one knows to be sufficiently powerful, without being stimulated by the persuasions of others. We may safely conclude, with St. James, that "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."

It is true, that every age and employment has its snares, but the feet of the young are most easily entrapped. Issuing forth, as you do, in the morning of life, into the wide field of existence, where the flowers are all open, it is no wonder, that you pluck some that are poisonous. Tasting every golden fruit that hangs over the garden of life, it is no wonder, that you should find some of the most tempting hollow and mouldy. But the peculiar characteristic of your age, my young friends, is impetuosity and presumptuousness. You are without caution, because without experience. You are precipitate, because you have enjoyed so long the protection of others that you have yet to learn to protect yourselves. You grasp at every pleasure, because it is new, and every society charms with a freshness which you will be surprised to find gradually wearing away. Young as you are upon the stage, there seems to be little

for you to know of yourselves; therefore you are contented to know little, and the world will not let you know more, till it has disappointed you oftener. Perhaps it has been foolishly impressed upon your fancies, that it is expected of youth, that it should be gay, of age, that it should be sober; that it is the duty of youth, to enjoy, and that age will bring the disposition to restrain, and the leisure to repent. You are yet, also, unsuspecting and credulous. Satiety has not yet produced disgust. Disappointment has not yet taught you that the pleasures of sense and fancy, though they are the earliest, are not the most permanent, of human pleasures. If you will not learn from instruction, you must learn from experiment. Take care that it be not fatal.

Youth, also, although it has not the deep-rooted prejudices of age, entertains a thousand false notions, which are the consequence of superficial attainments. The reason of a young man, when it first begins to feel its powers, loves to sport itself in paradoxes and singular opinions. But in morals paradox is always dangerous. The next step to justifying irregularity is to practise it; and many a man looks back upon his early opinions with mingled astonishment and gratitude, and blesses God that his habits were never so corrupt as his principles.

It is true, that age has its failings; but, I believe, it will often be found, that the follies of age, though utterly opposite, are frequently the consequence of the sins of early years. The desire of accumulating wealth, which is so natural to age, is likely to be most powerful in him who, in his youth, was profuse and extravagant. That querulousness and discontent, which, in age, are sometimes the attendants of real infirmities, are not less frequently found

to be the punishment of the excesses of early life, spent too carelessly and exhausted too soon. Those ill-humors, which we kindly excuse by calling them natural to particular seasons of life, are usually the dregs of former indulgences. The follies of the young are sometimes amiable in the eyes of the world; but it is the punishment of amiable sins, to lose in after-life all their charms, and to be the more odious, the older they appear.

Entering, then, into life, you will find every rank and occupation environed with its peculiar temptations; and, without some other and higher principle than that which influences a merely wordly man, you are not, a moment, secure. You are poor, and you think pleasure and fashion and ambition will disdain to spread their snares for so ignoble a prey. It is true, they may. But take care that dishonesty does not dazzle you with an exhibition of sudden gains. Take care that want does not disturb your imagination by temptations to fraud. Distress may drive you to indolence and despair, and these united may drown you in intemperance. Even robbery and murder have sometimes stalked in at the breach which poverty or calamity has left unguarded. You are rich, and you think that pride and a just sense of reputation will preserve you from the vices of the vulgar. It is true, they may; and you may be ruined in the progress of luxury, and lost to society, and, at last, to God, while sleeping in the lap of the most flattering and enervating abundance. Let the prayer of Agur be included in the petition of our text: "Lead me not, O God, into temptation, by giving me either poverty or riches; but feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

Again; you are educated for a sedentary and contemplative life. You expect to know little of the manners of the age, and to look, at a safe distance, upon the vices and seductions of the world. To avoid temptation by flying to solitude has been a perpetual delusion of studious minds. This is the principle upon which the monastic institutions of many religions have been founded; institutions which, as has been accurately observed, have been supported rather by the fear of vice than the love of virtue. But do not flatter yourselves that retirement has no dangers. The very security from temptation, which the recluse imagines himself to enjoy, is itself a temptation.

A life of study also tends insensibly to foster a species of intellectual selfishness, which a more liberal intercourse with mankind would replace with more valuable, though, perhaps, less extraordinary, dispositions. In solitude the benevolent feelings cannot attain their full growth; a proud misanthropy is indulged, and a man may imagine himself too pure or too intellectual for society, when he is only too proud.

I will not attempt to enumerate even a small part of the temptations which await you in the active pursuits of life. I only know that you will sometimes find yourselves in exigences, where contending passions will beat against your sternest principles. I hope they will be founded upon the rock of the gospel. You will find, here, sudden prospects of gain opening upon your fancy, and obscuring your clear perception of justice. There, secrecy and silence will encourage you to voluptuousness. Conviviality, good fellowship, and the exhilarating influence of society, will steal away your time, and, perhaps, tempt you to the intemperate use of sinful pleasures. If, in the language of

the world, you are so happy as to please, and to be taken up by, those who control much of the amusements and pleasures of the day, fashion will betray you into a thousand senseless extravagances, and, what I fear more, will surely repress many a noble quality, too exalted for the standard of the day. But, my friends, when I think of the insensible force of general example in every rank and employment of life, I fear that you may be fashioned only for this world. There is a perpetual and unobserved influence of custom, to which, as soon as we rise in the world, we all unconsciously bend, like young plants which have been growing up straight, while they were low and secluded, but, as soon as they reach the height where the light is admitted from without, bend all their leaves and branches insensibly toward the part where there is the strongest glare. The influence of popular manners conceals from us our follies and our vices among those of the world. My friends, the vigilance, which alone can preserve you, must be unwearied. The contest may be severe, but the victory will be glorious, and the reward will be eternal.

But to portray dangers, without considering how you may guard against them, would be not only useless, but unfavorable to your security. Let me, then, thirdly, suggest some considerations which will always come to the relief of our sinking or fluctuating minds, when they are the prey of strong temptation. Previously, however, let me beseech you to remember that the aid of God's spirit is promised to every holy resolution and to every sincere exertion. It is not less philosophically than theologically true, that no effort in the cause of goodness is ultimately lost.

God never paralyzed an arm raised in the cause of virtue.

The first and strongest motive, which I can offer you, to resist early the temptations of sin, is, the consequences of a single victory or a single defeat. The life of man is a campaign, the result of which sometimes depends upon the first battles. And need I tell you, Christians, that the consequences of your youthful conduct extend through a series of ages, which the imagination, even, cannot reach? If death were really to close your expectations forever, you might take the gay delights of the Epicurean. You might eat and drink, for to-morrow you would die. You might float pleasantly down the stream of time, lying on your oars, and laughing at those who were laboring against the tide. But, my friends, when I look forward only a few years, I see you in the immediate presence of that Power who has given us a being which, he has told us, we can never abdicate. You may die; but you die to live again, and to tell how you have lived. It will not be enough, to say that thousands have run the short career of ruin before you. They will rise up from their sleep of the tomb to accuse you of having followed them. We have a great trust deposited in our hands. It is no less than the gift of eternal life, and we are to account for it; even if all nature were to perish, we must account for it.

Consider, also, the honor of a faithful resistance to the temptations of the world. Your struggles are secret, they are unknown to the world, and, therefore, the world cannot reward you. Or if it should reward you, you will find its loudest applauses dying away, at last, upon your ear, and the still, small voice of God's approbation will be sweeter than the music of the spheres.

Again; look steadily at the character of a man of established virtue and Christian excellence. How noble a creature is he in God's creation! lord of himself, though destitute of everything. Sin has no dominion over him. The world reverences, but cannot reward him. Observe him with attention. If his foot sometimes slip, he falls to rise again. Passion may sometimes surprise an unguarded fortress, but the citadel is safe; the soul is strong in faith, and in devout reliance on the succor of Heaven. The food, which nourishes him, descends from above, and the supply cannot be shut out by the world.

My young friends, I would direct your attention to the character of our Savior, and beg of you to study it, till you love it and dare to imitate it. We soon search after great examples, to encourage us in this folly and that vice, fond of resembling the great, if it be only in their defects, and sinning with less compunction, if we can only sin in company. Look at the Son of God, who was just entering, like yourselves, a hostile world, inexperienced, and without a friend. Scarcely had he commenced the great business of his life, the duties of his ministry, before, as a preparation for it, he underwent the severest discipline. In whatever way we interpret the history of our Savior's temptation, it cannot be understood otherwise than as presenting a severe and distressing trial of his mind. He had early to struggle, then, with the temptations of interest, and vanity, and ambition; but the tempter was, in each of his plans, defeated. At another period of his life, you will find him invited to assume an unlawful power, and fully able to avail himself of the enthusiasm of the multitude, and to be crowned king of the Jews. But, rejecting every allurement which might divert him, for any season, from the proper

business of his ministry, he retires alone to a desert place, casting aside those honors which have, in every age, tempted the ambition of his less humble followers.

Do not be contented, my young friends, to read and admire what you may imitate. The example, even of the Son of God, from his cradle to his grave, is transmitted to us that we may imitate it.

The last resource against temptation is prayer. Escaping, then, from your tempter, fly to God. Cultivate the habit of devotion. It shall be a wall of fire around you, and your glory in the midst of you. To this practice the uncorrupted sentiments of the heart impel you, and invitations are as numerous as they are merciful, to encourage you. When danger has threatened your life, you have called upon God. When disease has wasted your health, and you have felt the tomb opening under your feet, you have called upon God. When you have apprehended heavy misfortunes, or engaged in hazardous enterprises, you have, perhaps, resorted to God, to ask his blessing. But what are all these dangers to the danger which your virtue may be called to encounter on your first entrance into life? In habitual prayer you will find a safeguard. You will find every good resolution fortified by it, and every seduction losing its power, when seen in the new light which a short communion with Heaven affords. In prayer you will find that a state of mind is generated, which will shed a holy influence over the whole character; and those temptations, to which you were just yielding, will vanish, with all their allurements, when the daystar of devotion rises in your hearts.

With this view, our Savior has inserted the petition in the text, "Lead us not into temptation." Let us dwell

upon it in every prayer. "If," in the words of a pious man, "sinning has not made us leave off praying, praying will make us leave off sinning." "Watch," then, my young friends, "and pray, that you enter not into temptation."

SERMON XV.

1 CORINTHIANS v. 8.

BUT WITH THE UNLEAVENED BREAD OF SINCERITY AND TRUTH.

THE Apostle appears here to be giving directions as to the mode of observing the communion. In imitation of the feast of the passover, before which the Jews were required to remove all leaven out of their houses, and to eat the festival with unleavened bread, the Apostle exhorts the Corinthians to observe the distinguishing rite of ther religion, which commemorates their deliverance from sin and death by the sacrifice of Christ, "with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." This injunction, which is here particularly applied to the celebration of the Supper, it is my intention to consider in its importance to the whole character of a Christian; for he, who has come forward to this characteristic ceremony hypocritically, or in the spirit of imposition, cannot be supposed to be more sincere in the rest of his conduct.

Sincerity is a word which is often used in an indeterminate and unsatisfactory manner, so that we often hear men called sincere who have no other quality in the world to recommend them. A man may be sincerely impious, or sincerely intolerant. He may be following his judgment, and even his conscience, when he is offending against the laws of God and man. In the common sense of the

word, as it is opposed merely to dissimulation, the quality is negative, indifferent, not much to be desired, and sometimes dangerous. When it is applied, however, to religion, it is used in a good sense, and usually includes the idea of unqualified and hearty devotion to the will of God. Still, even when used with reference to religion, it is sometimes made a convenient substitute for some more specific description of men's character and motives; and we are glad to avoid a close scrutiny of the justice of the opinions or conduct of ourselves or others, by saying, when we can say nothing else, that they are sincere.

Thus it happens, that, when the subject of religious opinions is discussed, and some one is found who deviates from the common standard, and question is made of his correctness, the conclusion often heard is, "He may be erroneous, but he gives proof of his sincerity." When the principle, on which a man acts, is canvassed, and doubts are raised of the religious or moral character of another, and some are proposing one test of character, and some another, the inquiry is usually terminated by saying, "Though he may be imperfect or mistaken, yet we have reason to think him sincere."

A word of such common and convenient application deserves to be thoroughly understood and cautiously used. Especially in our examination of ourselves, as well as of others, it is of importance, that we know what it is we pretend to, when we lay claim to sincerity.

In this discourse it will be my object to ascertain what is implied in the character of religious sincerity; and, in doing this, I shall first consider with what imperfections sincerity is consistent, and, in the next place, endeavor to point out some of the most sure and indispensable tests of this quality.

In the first place, then, sincerity is not inconsistent with some degree of prejudice. Such are the constitution of human nature and the circumstances of our education, that the best of men find it impossible to grow up without receiving many prejudices against individuals or descriptions of men, as well as against opinions, which greater age and further information are necessary to correct. Thus we find in the evangelists that the excellent Nathaniel, when he is first informed of the origin of Jesus, to whom he is introduced, cries out, in the true spirit of a Jew of that age, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" This appears to us a most absurd and unworthy prepossession; yet it did not prevent our Savior's immediately giving this very Nathaniel that memorable character, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." This instance in the evangelical narrative should teach us candor in our judgments of men, and encourage us to make every allowance for inevitable prejudice, where it is not obstinately and unjustly cherished. The true difference between a sincere and insincere opinionist is this: that the former, though he is not free from unfortunate biases, is yet willing to be free from them. He neither flies from conviction, nor does he close his eyes against evidence. He is a friend, perhaps, of particular men, or attached to particular opinions; but he is neither afraid of the progress of truth, nor does he place impediments in the way of examination. The insincere bigot, on the contrary, stifles his convictions, and perverts testimony. He is angry, when he is found in the wrong; and dissembles, when he is really convinced of his error. His prejudices are personal, and his views are selfish and malignant. Not so the guileless Nathaniel; for he came, at the invitation of Jesus, saw, and was convinced.

Again; religious sincerity is not inconsistent with considerable ignorance. The whole history of pious men bears witness to and illustrates the all-comprehensive nature of true religion. We find in the Gospels that the apostles, who were most sincerely attached to their Master during his life, were yet ignorant of his real character till after his resurrection. They could not be persuaded that he was to suffer; and, even after he had suffered, their minds were full of his royal character, and they were expecting to see him "restore the kingdom to Israel." Before the vision granted to Peter, the disciples had no suspicion that the favor of God was to be extended to the Gentiles; and, if we may judge from the language of some of them in their epistles, they seem to have expected the end of the world during their own lives, and the return of Christ from heaven. Now, whoever will consider the importance of these facts and doctrines, such as the suffering of Christ, his real character as Messiah, the comprehension and extension of his church, and the time of his second advent, must acknowledge that they were subjects of what we should call fundamental importance in the Christian dispensation. If, then, the early disciples could remain under such gross misapprehensions on these subjects, and yet be regarded as the sincere followers and friends of Christ, it is, surely, too presumptuous in us, to say of one another that a denial of this or that tenet, which to us appears plainly revealed, is yet inconsistent with another man's religious sincerity, or a state of acceptance with God. It may be, that unity of sentiment, as far as some would wish to carry it, has become necessary to unity of affection; but we ought to inquire, whether we are not wrong in harboring that temper of mind, which makes this

unity of opinion necessary to Christian affection. You, perhaps, have attained to certain fundamental principles of Christian belief, which appear to you so clear that you are astonished how any one, who reads the Scriptures, can, for a moment, doubt them. You are conscious of your own sincerity, and it is enough; and, therefore, it is natural for you to conclude that he, who does not think like yourself, cannot be sincere. But let us remember, that, when we once begin to make that a test of others' sincerity, which we know would have been of our own, we go beyond our Christian liberty; for no one but God has a right to say what is fundamental to any individual, or what extravagances or errors may coëxist with humility and honesty of mind.

Religious sincerity is not inconsistent with occasional lapses, or considerable infirmities. "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not;" and if God should be strict to mark iniquity even in the most sincere, who could stand before him? Thus it may happen, that the most devout Christian may find his affections sometimes languid, and his thoughts sometimes wandering; but, if this were the habitual state of his mind in prayer, he would have reason to be alarmed, and we should doubt his sincerity. The meek may sometimes be betrayed into passion, and the temperate into excessive indulgence; but the proof of his insincerity, in such cases, would be, not that he fell into the sin, but that he fell into it without remorse, or exposed himself again without precaution. There are some faults to which the most ardent and open dispositions are peculiarly exposed; and there are others, of the habitual temper, which never appear in the ordinary and public deportment. If, then, you would know what

faults of your character may excite a doubt of the sincerity of your religious professions, be assured that your sudden infirmities of temper are not half so sure a test of your religion as what may be called your ruling passion and tenor of life.

Religious sincerity is not inconsistent with a man's doubts of his religious sincerity, or with a great degree of diffidence and concern. It is true, that every man must know, whether the regard, which he pays to God and to his duty, is affected or real. He must know, whether his religious services are paid to God or to the world, and whether his conduct is only an outside show of conformity to virtue, or proceeds from a firm principle of rectitude within. This knowledge, however, of his own spirit is consistent with the most humble and fearful sense of imperfection, and with frequent depression and despondency. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" By this is not meant, we conceive, that a Christian cannot judge of the sincerity of his own professions, or of the state of his own determinations, at the time when he considers; but only that such is the weakness of human virtue, and such the liableness of man to conceal from himself his real character, that no man can, at any time, feel secure of his future happiness. It is equivalent to the assertion, that no man can say, "I am sure of not being betrayed into any future transgression."

The doctrine of confidence has often been insisted on most unadvisedly and unjustly, by some who make it an essential test of a Christian character. As far as we may be allowed to judge, that kind of security and inward testimony of faith, to which some Christians have laid claim,

is not consistent with that temper of fearing always, which is made a scriptural characteristic of a good man. Neither is it consistent with those expressions of the apostle Paul, who, surely, could have had no doubts of his own sincerity, where he says, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

May we not conclude, then, that a consciousness of sincerity in the service of God is something entirely different from that assurance of salvation, and that confidence of God's favor, to which some Christians have aspired? That mixture of humility, which belongs to real religion, is a mixture of fear; and it never was intended, that any conviction of our religious sincerity should entirely subdue it, because no man can ever be sure that he shall not fall from his present steadfastness, nor can any man look back with unmingled satisfaction on his Christian character.

I have now mentioned several imperfections with which religious sincerity may be united. I proceed to the second head of my discourse, which is, to give you some of the most essential marks or tests of this temper. My Christian friends, this is a subject of primary importance in religion. Without sincerity our obedience is sin; without sincerity our religion is but vanity and guilt. We cannot deceive God; we may deceive, perhaps we have deceived, ourselves. "Examine yourselves," then, "whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves."

In the first place, you have great reason to doubt of your religious sincerity, if you make no progress in holiness. Every principle of real virtue is an active and a progres-

sive principle. It cannot leave a man satisfied with his present attainments; and, if you have ever found yourselves long stationary in your religious characters, the probability is that you have been retrograding. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." He, who carefully examines himself, cannot avoid discovering his imperfections; and he, who is afraid to discover, or is negligent in the search, has no sincere disposition to correct them. Whatever you may choose to call the ruling principle of a religious life, whether the fear or the love of God, whether it be gratitude, or humility, or ambition of spiritual improvement, all, all urge us forward to greater attainments. Is it love? Real love is never tired with pleasing its object, never at ease when it has suspicion of offending it. Is it gratitude? Gratitude never thinks it has done enough. Humility never feels itself secure; and the love of the spiritual always grasps at something higher. If, then, my friends, you find in yourselves a disposition to circumscribe the limits of your duty, if you find that you endeavor to steal, as much as you can, from your obligations, and give, as much as you can well spare, to the world and its pleasures, if you are continually comparing yourselves with others, and think you have done enough when you have done more than they, you have great reason to doubt the sincerity of your religion.

In the second place, if your most secret and private actions are not as pure and correct as your public deportment, you have no claim to the praise of religious sincerity. I ask you, then, if your intercourse with God in private is devout; or if your public reverence of religious institutions is only the result of your deference to the habits of the

community? I ask you, if you prefer to give your alms in private, when no eye but God's discerns it, to giving them in public, where spectators will allow you the credit of the alms; or whether you are not uneasy, till, by your own or others' means, your benefactions are known? I ask you, if, in your most trivial negotiations, you are as scrupulous and honest as in your large and notorious transactions; whether the absolute security from detection would not tempt you into anything like injustice? I ask you, if your conduct, in your families, and with those over whom you have control, or with whom you are intimate, is as carefully regulated by the laws of Christian benevolence as you would lead us to believe from your public conduct; or are you a Christian in church, and a tyrant at home? In short, is your religion a spirit which animates you, and which gives peace to your heart, and not a countenance which you assume? Would it be the guide of your life, if there were no one to observe you but Him who "seeth not as man seeth"?

Thirdly, is your obedience universal and unlimited? This is a most essential test of religious sincerity. Do you make no exceptions in favor of particular vices, and continue to live in some habits which your conscience tells you are not precisely right? The meaning of that passage in James, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," includes this test of religious obedience. Why "guilty of all"? Because, if he deliberately and habitually makes an exception in favor of some passion, lust, or habit, he discovers that he really has no sincere respect for the authority which establishes the whole law.

There are several cases in human life, which may illus-

trate the nature of the principle of religious obedience. What should we, for instance, think of the sincerity of that man's friendship, who should make all the professions of attachment, and appear, through the greater part of his life, devoted to his friend, who should yet deliberately desert him in his time of need, or betray, when tempted, one only of his most important secrets? Thus no course of religious obedience has any claim to the praise of sincerity, which is not unlimited and without reserve. A religious man will not say, "I am not guilty of this or of that offence; but I hope God will pardon me for a particular habit, which I find it difficult to relinquish. Neither will he say, "I am sensible of the guilt of a particular course of conduct; and, if God spares my life, I will break off at such a future time." Oh, no! my dear friends, this is the most horrible hypocrisy. It is such trifling as nothing can atone for. The man of this partial obedience, and the man, who is continually deferring the day of his repentance, is yet "in the gall of wickedness, and in the bond of iniquity."

Lastly, what appears to you the governing motive of your conduct? In those portions of your character, in which your zeal is most engaged and your exertions most strenuous, what is your object? the promotion of your own interests and the interests of your party, or the benefit of mankind, the glory of God, and the cause of virtue? How far is your sense of your duty to God predominant in your life? Does it lead you to sacrifice your property, and your reputation, and whatever you hold most dear, where you are most evidently pledged? or have you contrived to conceal even from yourself the real motives of your behavior, and to avail yourself of the name of

religion and of God's honor, when you have nothing of them but the name? In short, is not your reverence for God, your sense of religious obligation, affected by the changes of the age, and the character of your contemporaries? Are you "on the Lord's side," even if you stand alone?

My friends, this subject of sincerity is of infinite importance to us. It is the foundation, the grand preliminary, of a religious character. It is indispensable to the acceptance of any of our services. Without it, our religion is our condemnation, our observances and rites are the records of our sin. Without this, it is impossible to have any satisfaction in duty; religion will be our burden, God our terror, our consciences our stings, and death will overwhelm us with inconceivable dismay. With this only can we "assure our hearts before God. For, if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. But, beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God."

My Christian friends, especially you who are now to sit down at the table of the Lord, "grace be with you who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." This, this is that wedding garment without which you cannot be welcome, without which, indeed, you cannot enjoy the feast. Your sincerity here you must test by the disposition with which you celebrate the Supper. Have you a sense of the reason for which it was instituted, and do you observe it because Christ has instituted it? Do not unworthy motives mingle with your conduct? Does this regard for Christ's authority pacify your minds, and give you a happy satisfaction in the discharge of this duty, which the opinion of the world does not interrupt? Do you cherish no secret inclination to dispense with the rite, or take to yourselves no peculiar

merit in the performance? Are you sensible of that goodness and greatness which you commemorate, and do you seek for those benefits, and no others, which this rite is calculated to give? Have you a sense of the mercy of God in the scheme of human redemption, and are you sincere in your dispositions of love toward your fellow-Christians? If so, come forward "in full assurance of faith;" "rejoicing in the testimony of your conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, and not with fleshly wisdom," you keep the feast. Draw near with a true heart, and without dissimulation.

SERMON XVI.

MARK v. 19.

GO HOME TO THY FRIENDS, AND TELL THEM HOW GREAT THINGS THE LORD HATH DONE FOR THEE.

THE poor man, to whom this was said, had been cured by Jesus of a most fearful disorder, and so affected was he with gratitude, that he instantly resolved to attach himself to his benefactor, and spend with him the remainder of his life. "No," said our Lord, "rather go home to thy family and friends in Decapolis, and tell them what great things God hath done for thee." We are told that he obeyed, and began to proclaim openly, in his native country, and among his domestic friends, the compassion and kindness of Jesus.

I wish, at this time, my friends, to call your attention not so much to our public advantages as to our private, personal, and social blessings. If we would awaken our sensibility to the innumerable blessings of our condition, we must not take too wide a range; we must limit our vision to some near and definite objects, lest, taking too extensive a survey, we should view everything indistinctly, and remember nothing with precision, in the boundlessness of God's benevolence.

There is a class of blessings, which, because we have so long enjoyed them, we are tempted to forget that we pos-

sess, and to regard as the constant and immutable laws of our condition, rather than as favors no less extraordinary than they are unmerited ; I mean the peculiar circumstances of our social and domestic life ; circumstances to which no man can say that he has especially contributed, for they are the result of God's good providence, watching over former events and early habits, rather than of any foresight and judgment of our own. I am the more induced to make these the subject of our grateful review, because, from their silent, unobtrusive, and permanent nature, they are not apt, at any one time, to make a peculiarly forcible impression ; and they are in danger of being overlooked, because they are so uniform and quiet, except by a mind tenderly and piously alive to the goodness of God. The truth is, that we are very much in the habit of keeping ourselves in ignorance of the real sources of our happiness. The unexpected events of life, and, much more, those on which we calculate, are far from being those which constitute its real enjoyment. Even events of public good-fortune, which call forth the most frequent and audible acknowledgments, are, really, not those which contribute most to our personal well-being; and much less do we depend, for our most valuable happiness, on what we call fortunate occurrences, or upon the multiplication of our public amusements, or the excitement, the novelty, the ecstasy, which we make so essential to our pleasures, and for which we are always looking out with impatience. It is not the number of the great, dazzling, affecting, and much talked of pleasures, which makes up the better part of our substantial happiness ; but it is the delicate, unseen, quiet, and ordinary comforts of social and domestic life, for the loss of which, all, that the world has dignified with the name of pleasure, would

not compensate us. Let any man inquire, for a single day, what it is which has employed and satisfied him, and which really makes him love life, and he will find that the sources of his happiness lie within a very narrow compass. He will find that he depends almost entirely on the agreeable circumstances which God has made to lie all around him, and which fill no place in the record of public events. Indeed, we may say of human happiness what Paul quotes for a more sacred purpose, "It is not hidden from thee; neither is it far off; it is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us? neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us? but it is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart."

In the first place, there is an extraordinary degree of tranquillity and security always attending our social condition, which constitutes much of its value. Repose, it is true, is not always a blessing; certainly not where it is the repose of desolation, of insensibility, or the threatening stillness which precedes the whirlwind. But, where it is the result, as ours is, of peculiar habits and local circumstances, of which almost the whole world may be envious, and for which, at this moment, millions are praying, it deserves to be most gratefully acknowledged. It is this singular tranquillity, which gives to our external and intellectual advantages unspeakable worth. There are other countries, in which much more wealth is accumulated, but where the proprietor trembles, while he casts up his treasure, and grasps it the closer, not so much from avarice as fear. There are countries, where you may find more numerous refinements, society more intellectual, polished, and advanced; but where do you find minds so entirely at

ease, where communication so unshackled by apprehension, where opinion so little fettered by custom or power, and man so much the master of his pleasures, his means, his language, and even his thoughts? Our social intercourse is nowhere disturbed with apprehension. We enjoy what we have, almost without forethought, not because we know not but we may be despoiled of it to-morrow, but because we have a sentiment of its duration. The noise of war has been rolling continually at what seems an indefinite distance, and, instead of disturbing, it has rather, like the thunder of an evening cloud that has passed over, contributed to our deeper repose. We hear of the disasters of other nations, and we sometimes tremble for them with benevolent apprehensions and hopes; but it is not because we have a child or a friend exposed to the dreadful hazards of battle; it is not because we are doubtful whether the event may not have decided the fate of our property, our liberty, or our comfort; but because we feel a natural interest in their sufferings, which cannot and ought not to be extinguished. We seem to feel a permanency in everything around us, and a security which we hardly know how to explain. Whence, then, this peace and order? To whom are we indebted for them? Can any man say that he has essentially contributed to their continuance? If we ascribe them to our peculiar habits and manners and government, we must acknowledge the good providence of God, directing the circumstances which have established this security. Go hence, and tell thy friends, who it is that hath preserved peace in thy borders, and learn to trust, not in thyself, but in Him.

Our social and domestic condition is, secondly, distinguished by a diffusion of competence and of the means of pros-

perity, in which every man has a share. Where do we find families, or individuals, who do not, in some comfortable degree, partake of all the essential comforts which wealth can procure? Who is driven out of society because he is too poor to partake, in some form, of its pleasures? Every morning's sun, as it rises, brings to every man a provision for the day, or lights him to the means of procuring it. How much may be retrenched from every station in society, before poverty can be even perceptible; and how much more, before we should hear the cry of want! Who among us returns in the evening to his family, to have his heart broken by the cries of his children clinging to his knees for bread? Whose sleep is disturbed by the thin phantoms of to-morrow's difficulties? So general is our prosperity, that, if we would find distress, we must look for it; it does not obtrude itself upon our notice. The miseries, which really exist, do not throng upon us so fast that the hand of charity is exhausted before it can effectually relieve them. We see frequent changes from luxury to mediocrity; but how faint and rare is the cry of real and incurable wretchedness! Contrivances for comfort meet us at every door we enter. Everywhere the table is spread, and the cup is filled; everywhere we find men ascending from convenience to comfort, to neatness, to elegance, to luxury, to profusion. No one is cast out because he is unable to support his place in this continually ascending feast of abundance. The wants, that are felt, are rather the cravings of appetites that have been pampered, or of ambition too much excited, than of real poverty. In the prodigious extent of an unoccupied country behind us, there seems to be left a common fund for every man's exigences. The reduced and the unfortunate change their residence, and, if we hear of them

again, it is only to hear of their prosperity. We look around for the poor, and we meet with, here and there, the infirm, the diseased, the aged, the imprudent, and the profligate foreigner; but for native, irremediable want we search in vain. Instead of poverty, we find, indeed, discontent, envy, avarice, overreaching, and profuseness; and we are told of disappointments and bankruptcies; but these are the miseries of abundance, not of indigence.

If you would know your own happiness, contrast with it the condition of those parts of the world, where the reduced and humbled man of wealth and of rank looks round, in vain, for the means of employment; where the poor are deprived of all the real comforts of society, and compressed into manufactories, mines, hospitals, and prisons, or driven into armies, and left to perish unsought, unwept, unremembered; and then go home, for you have a home, and to your friends, for even these your poverty will gain you, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you. Truly, the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage.

A third characteristic of our social condition is the general diffusion of the means of obtaining knowledge, from which results that intellectual cultivation which is better than wealth, and which gives the highest interest to social life. In this region of our country, if we look round for the ignorant, we shall find them, indeed, without trouble; but, if we look for those who are condemned, by disadvantages of birth and situation, to unavoidable ignorance, we shall search in vain. Here no man, who feels the intimations of his intellectual life, and begins to pant after knowledge and truth, need waste away in hopeless obscurity, shut out from the means of knowledge, and secluded

from the society of the intelligent. What is peculiar in our society is, that nothing debars any one from reaching, if he pleases, the highest degree of intellectual improvement; nothing forbids his sharing in any refinement or excellence, which he is capable of enjoying. Such is the equality of conditions among us that the intelligent and the unintelligent mingle everywhere together; every man gives and receives according to his gifts, and each shares in the peculiar improvements of all. We have no monopoly of information; the rich and the poor, the mechanic and the merchant, the ignorant and the learned, the idle, the inquisitive, and the laborious student, may all go and drink at the same springs; and there is kept in continual circulation a fund of intellectual riches, which every man may use, and to which he is not debarred from contributing.

The actual amount of intellectual wealth, and the enjoyment derived from it in general society, may be very much surpassed, as it undoubtedly is, in other countries. But here nothing restrains the eagerness of curiosity, nothing frowns upon the free exercise of the powers, in conversation, in writing, and in speaking; and how much is there continually within our reach, to refine, to soften, to elevate, and to delight us! From how much weariness are we thus relieved! How many vacant hours are thus employed! How many sorrows soothed, and spirits elevated! How many minds lifted out of the dust! How much sensuality is thus wiped away, and how much is added to the value of human life! Those, who know how much the love of knowledge tends to correct the follies of society, to purify its pleasures, to preserve from vicious amusements, and to fill up the vacant spaces of active life, will feel grateful for the state of society, where no man need be ashamed to

appear well informed, nor is any man obliged to bear the mortifying burden of his ignorance longer than he chooses.

Closely connected with these great advantages of our intellectual condition, and, indeed, forming the most valuable part of them, are the blessings of our religion. I cannot express to you the sense which I have of the value of that influence on society, which yet flows from our ancient habits of thinking on this most interesting subject. I am ready to exclaim, with the ardent Zecharias: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel! for he hath visited and redeemed his people, according to the mercy promised to our fathers, in that he hath granted unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, may serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life." When you consider, my Christian hearers, of what importance is a sense of religion to the good order and purity of our social intercourse, you will thank God that so much of it has been imperceptibly retained among us. For it is this, which will give to society a degree of security, and impart to it a confidence, of which no other sentiment or principle can supply the place; and, where this exists, free, pure, rational, conscientious, and devout, it gives to the character a tone of dignity and freedom, which no accomplishment can bestow. When you think how easy it is, nay, how common it has been, to make religion the bane and terror of social life, the destroyer of everything kind and generous, the source of the most depressing superstition, bitter jealousy, and malignant passions, your hearts ought to be filled with gratitude at the circumstances of New England. What are we, or what were our fathers, that we should enjoy a toleration the most perfect, which nothing but the bad passions of individuals can disturb; a

freedom of worship and of opinion, which smiles at the powerless impositions of men; and a general liberality of thinking, which has an unobserved influence upon many who do not acknowledge it; and that, with all this, notwithstanding the growth of our luxury, and the temptations of our good-fortune, we should yet retain so much respect for the institutions of the gospel, and so much sense of its indispensable value to society? When I think of all these peculiarities of our religious condition, and ask how they have arisen, I can find no other answer than that the good providence of God alone has preserved to us such an inheritance of blessings.

Let me lead you, last of all, back to your families, and refresh you with the sight of the blessings of your domestic life. Indeed, if I were to search for a spot, where you could best observe the effect of the blessings we have already enumerated, and best feel the peculiar happiness of your social condition, I should only open the door to your own firesides, and place you in the circle of your children and your friends. There it is, indeed, that you ought to enjoy the united influences of all the other advantages we have mentioned. If you are not happy there, the fault is not in your circumstances, but in your dispositions. For, when we consider the enviable state of the domestic relations among us, of husband and wife, of parents and children, we are at a loss to suggest any improvement, except in the use of these advantages. Notwithstanding the rapid encroachment of luxury, it has not yet so corrupted our modes of life, under the pretence of refining them, that parents are daily separated from their children. You may, at any time, collect them around you, refresh yourselves with their innocence, watch their

budding talents and virtues, and enjoy their happiness. The intercourse between you and your offspring is not disturbed by any foolish customs and formalities; no rights of primogeniture enter, to kindle jealousies and coldness. As they grow up successively, they gradually pass into your companions, your friends, and, at last, your counsellors; perhaps your stay and consolation. So abundant are the means of living that your children are not driven, unprovided for, from the paternal roof, to seek elsewhere a precarious support. No officer of despotism bursts open your doors, to drag the reluctant youth to be sacrificed on the field of battle; nor does every mail bring you intelligence, which makes your heart bleed, of some new exposures or new sufferings which they are called to endure. So various and accessible are our means of education, also, that parents may always have some new pleasures in expectation from the improvement of their children. Soon they become qualified to partake of your own intellectual pursuits. Their curiosity keeps yours awake, their improvement rewards you; and the domestic circle, every day, brightens with new accessions in intelligence and pleasure. Thus they grow up with you at home; and here, at least, this blessed name yet expresses a reality, a substantial good, a sanctuary, a refuge from the troubles of life, the very centre of our national happiness. And when the fear and love of God dwell under your roofs, when his worship purifies and makes holy these domestic enjoyments, when your prayers, as they ascend, morning and evening, draw closer the sacred ties of parent and child, brother and sister, — but I need not dwell on the minutiæ of your blessings, I need not paint what your hearts, if they are rightly attempered, will represent to you with more vivid-

ness and reality. Go home, then, for you have a home, and tell your children what great things God has done for us.

This recital of our blessings, however grateful it may be to the mind, is yet attended with two considerations which press upon our attention. The first is, how little have we ourselves contributed to these advantages! They seem, in truth, to be the gifts of Providence alone, for we can hardly trace them to any positive causes. When we reflect upon our social and domestic lot, one thing is always evident, that, if all the good, we find, can be traced to the care of a most gracious Providence, all the evil, to which we are exposed, may be traced directly to those passions which the most favorable state of society cannot always suppress, to those corruptions which grow, alas! and ripen under the very sunshine of our prosperity. The other consideration, which may make us all tremble, is, how long shall this state of prosperity last? Has God given us a pledge of uninterrupted security and good-fortune? or does not its continuance depend much upon ourselves? If the cup of our prosperity intoxicate us, will it not fall, at last, from our hands, and be dashed in pieces?

My friends, let us think, before we part, of the duties which our very happiness imposes upon us. Ought we not, first of all, most gratefully and humbly to adore the distinguishing goodness of God? Perhaps we have hitherto overlooked the real foundation of our happiness; perhaps, if we have been sensible of the good, we have not thought of the Author. We have entered this garden of God, and carelessly cropped the flowers with which it is filled, and thought them planted only for our gratification. This is not the condition on which any of God's gifts are bestowed.

Our common prosperity, is, indeed, unexampled, but it is not out of the reach of injury. While it lasts, it is the duty of every man, to contribute what he can to preserve it. If you would advance the glory of your age, and make it worthy of being remembered by those who shall come after you, beware of the encroachments of luxury. Nothing will so much tend to make you insensible to the best gifts of Providence, and callous to the purest pleasures of life, as the love of noisy and frivolous distinctions, the pursuit of vicious pleasures, and the tyranny of fashion. Consider whether you do not contribute to the corruptions of the age, by an immoderate pursuit of amusement. Consider how easily the minds of those, who are coming into life, are enfeebled and deluded by the doubtful examples of those whom they are taught to consider as giving the tone to the manners of the age.

To preserve our social pleasures in any good degree of purity, nothing will so much contribute as the cultivating a taste for domestic life and the quiet and affectionate pleasures which it affords. In such a state of society as ours, also, there is danger, lest the love of money, or of merely sensual pleasures, should overwhelm the rising generation. To obviate these evils, it is much to be desired, that the love of literature and of intellectual pursuits should be greatly encouraged; for, though the passion for knowledge is no proof of a principle of virtue, it is often a security against the vices and temptations of the world. Everything, which you contribute to the institutions of sound learning, and to promote a correct and pious education, you contribute to the peace, the purity, and the glory of the age.

Once more, my friends, what a treasure of felicity you

have in keeping! And by you it is to be bequeathed to those who are to be your successors, in a long posterity. Let your thoughts run on a few years in prospect, and can you endure to see those whom you have brought into life, whom you have trained up to fill your places, and whose destiny you now influence, can you endure to see them spoiling this rich inheritance, and then reproaching your memories? Can you look, without remorse, and see them taking their places in society, depraved by your example, lost to virtue, to peace, and to heaven?

Do not think you have discharged your obligations, when you have laid up for them a perishable inheritance on earth, when you have given them a customary education, and set them up in life. Oh, no! God, who watches over our employment of his gifts, demands of you, not only that you dedicate your children to him, but that you implant in them his fear and love, that you furnish them with the only sure sources of happiness, by your lessons of piety, by your example at home and in public, and by your prayers with them and for them. Without this you may leave them the wealth of the world, and it will only curse them; you may leave them the rank, the glory, the reputation of their fathers, and it will only render them the decorated victims of the indignation of Heaven. Consider, then, what obligations to others your privileges impose upon you. Walk within your houses with a perfect heart. Make them the nurseries of godliness. Resolve, that, from this day, you will not neglect this most solemn of your duties; and then, with a grateful heart, tell your friends what great things God has done for you.

SERMON XVII.

HEBREWS III. 1.

WHEREFORE, HOLY BRETHREN, PARTAKERS OF THE HEAVENLY CALLING, CONSIDER THE APOSTLE AND HIGH PRIEST OF OUR PROFESSION, CHRIST JESUS.

WHEN we rise from the contemplation of the character of Jesus, it is with a mixture of transport and of despair; of transport at finding that such immaculate excellence was embodied and exhibited in a human form, and despair lest it should be impossible to imitate it in the present mixed condition of human life. I know not how any man can take up any one of the Gospels and read it through, without feeling that there is something supernatural about the character of Jesus, without catching, at intervals, a glimpse of that divinity which seems to encircle him, or perceiving the truth and nature of the Centurion's exclamation, when he heard the last expression which escaped from the lips of the dying Savior, "Truly, this was the Son of God."

The moral character of Jesus is distinguished from that of every other teacher upon record by this peculiar circumstance, that it united excellences which are usually thought irreconcilable, or which are very rarely found conjoined in any individual. Endowed, as he was, with power which was calculated to impress beholders with the most reverential awe, he united with this a familiarity

which admitted, on easy terms of communication, all the grades and classes of society. He knew how to effect, also, that rare union of zeal with candor, which we seek in vain in other celebrated reformers. He combined, too, the utmost activity with a prudence which never deserted him, and irresistible power with unassuming gentleness. Look at his character from one point of view, and you would think he was formed only to suffer; from another, and he appears destined only to act. He was sensible of his high character and pretensions, yet meek and gentle and unresisting. Though he abated not from the rigor of his Father's requisitions, yet he was the preacher of a religion which offers relief to the burdened and succor to the miserable. In one word, he brought together in his character the utmost perfection of opposite, I might almost say, incompatible excellences.

To dwell upon the character of Jesus is the delight of every Christian, not merely because it confirms his faith, but because it has a salutary effect upon his own character and disposition; and those advanced Christians, who have satisfied themselves of the historical truth of Christianity, repose afterwards upon their original convictions, while their faith is continually strengthening itself, not merely by time and habit, but by those irresistible impressions which are made by a frequent and diligent reading of the New Testament.

It was no small part of the great design of God, when he interposed to reveal himself among men by his Son, to give us a living, visible specimen of human nature, such as it may become, when the operation of the gospel has its full influence. Hence it is a remarkable circumstance in the character of Jesus, that, though he was so intimately

united with God, and had power committed to him in heaven and in earth, his example is, in every moral respect, strictly practicable. It is an example to men in every condition. It teaches us how to live on earth, as well as to prepare ourselves for heaven. In every useful point of view it is accommodated to the imitation of common men.

It is my intention, in this discourse, to consider what may be called the practicableness of our Lord's example; that is, its practicableness as an example of social virtue held up to the imitation of such beings as we are.

In the first place, consider how completely this example would be marred and rendered ineffectual, or even dangerous, if the most piercing scrutiny had discovered a single stain in the character of Jesus; I do not say if such a stain had really existed, but even if it had seemed from the narrations, that there was anything which wore the appearance of immorality. The difficulty would be insuperable, even supposing it to arise merely from some defect in our knowledge of the circumstances of the case. We should labor under a burden which nothing could remove; because it might be said, that no Christian was obliged to follow a master, as divine, who had discovered a deficiency in that purity which he had made the object of his religion. In this respect, as in many others, the character of Christ remains eternally distinguished from that of any other teacher in the history of the world. It is not merely from the accounts of his friends, that we venture to make this assertion, but it is conceded even by his enemies. In all the busy murmurs of history about the characters of men, not a whisper can be distinguished which calumniates the Founder of our faith. Compare with this the character of Socrates, who,

great and good as he was, and often as he is made the theme of philosophical declamation and impertinent comparison with Jesus, was more than suspected of indulging in some of the fashionable vices of his age and country. And the divine Plato is not more clear of imputations. Need I mention the character of Mahomet, the privilege, which he claimed, of peculiar indulgence, his notorious sensuality, as well as his personal ambition? This list might be enlarged, if it were necessary, by the names of the most eminent philosophers of antiquity.

The singular usefulness of the example of our Savior appears, secondly, in this, that his whole life, as far as we are acquainted with it, was a life of active and substantial goodness. All his purposes were benevolent, all his practice disinterested. If he had not had it expressly in view, to exemplify the great precept of his religion, that no man liveth to himself, he might have merely declared the purpose of his mission and confirmed it by some splendid miracles. If it had not been one great part of his mediation, to leave us a perfect character of goodness, why should he have led such a laborious life of kindness? He never wrought a miracle without some gracious effect or moral purpose. He was indefatigable in relieving the real wants of men, in curing those diseases which human art could not reach, in assuaging their most distressing sorrows, in restoring to them their most essential comforts, as well as, in some instances, administering to their convenience and contributing to their pleasures. He does not merely tell them what they ought to do; he does not content himself with merely reproaching them for their sins and railing at their ignorance, but he does all in his power to instruct, in the most condescending, and to correct, in

the gentlest manner, their unfortunate prejudices. Whatever period we assign to our Savior's ministry, it was a space crowded with acts of essential goodness.

I will proceed now to mention some of the traits in the character of Jesus, which bear upon the main subject which I would keep in view, the practicableness of his example.

His conversation and conduct are complete specimens of what may be called coolness and soundness of mind, qualities indispensably necessary in one who would do good to the best effect, without defeating his own purposes by precipitancy, or endangering his life by imprudence. He discovers, at all times, a disposition to avoid dangers, where it was consistent with his duty; but he encounters the most dreadful hazards, when the destination of his Heavenly Father made it necessary for the accomplishment of his purposes. He does not, like a rash enthusiast, throw himself in the way of persecution; for, in many places of his history, we find him withdrawing himself from the pressure of the multitude and the observation of his enemies, when such an exposure would have precipitated the fatal catastrophe which he had constantly in view. He escapes, with the utmost prudence, from the ensnaring questions of the rulers; and does not, in the heat or the pride of his commission, permit himself to be embroiled in a controversy or a tumult. His replies are always judicious, his courage is perfectly sedate and without the least symptom of timidity. It is also plain, that his boldness is not the effect of passion. In short, he displays that very temper which he, who would do any great and singular good in a difficult world, must possess.

It is often the misfortune of those who have the most

ardent love of mankind and the most disinterested spirit of philanthropy, that their zeal is misguided, their courage borders on rashness, their passions are the first guides which they follow. Their best designs are, therefore, sometimes defeated by imprudence resulting from excess of virtuous ardor. Such is the imperfection of human exertion. But in our Savior we discover a warmth of goodness, which never enkindles and consumes itself; an intrepidity which never sought for approbation; a presence of mind, which was never surprised by the arts of his enemies, which was never lost in a moment of indignation.

There is another class of good men in the world, who, with the best dispositions to do good, and with a sincere concern for the character of others, have yet not sufficient resolution to meet difficulties, nor fortitude to bear reproach, in the service of truth and virtue. They talk well, but they dare not act. They wish to see a change, but dare not appear alone in any important measure, or even to take a share of that danger and suffering which must always belong to active integrity or great enterprises. Not so was the Savior of the world. He kept no terms with corruption, he made no excuses for hypocrisy, and propitiated not the resentment of guilty men of power. He knew how to meet the eye of hardened guilt, without fear of man, when he was discharging his duty, and without transgressing the obligations of a citizen or a subject. He did not utter his censures in private, and then fly from the consequences of his opinions; but he met iniquity in front, and appealed, for the truth of his reproaches, to the consciences of those who heard him. Neither was he more indulgent to the faults of his friends than to the crimes of his enemies. He was not afraid of losing them by reproving

what was really vicious, or by warning them of their temptations and their weakness; at the same time that he managed with the greatest address their unavoidable prejudices, and mildly corrected their ambitious expectations.

Again; I would mention a trait in our Savior's character, which is peculiarly deserving our notice and imitation. I mean his constant superiority to motives of fame or reputation. The great sin, which pollutes even the most illustrious actions of men, is the mixture of vanity. We find it in characters otherwise almost faultless; we detect it in our best services. We often resort to it in education; and we find that it exercises an unsanctified influence, where we should least expect it. When we discover it in others, it is with a sentiment of regret, which impairs our admiration; and, when we detect it in ourselves, if our hearts are allowed to answer before God, it is with a sentiment of mortification and humility. It is certain, that the most exalted minds are most free from this mixture; and it is the first and last object of the gospel, thoroughly to discharge it from our motives. Jesus was at an infinite distance from desiring to receive honor from men. Possessed of powers which could, in an instant, have drawn around him a body of enthusiastic and devoted followers, and have elevated him to any station or authority he could desire, he is yet employed in teaching humility to a few ambitious disciples. When they would "take him by force, to make him a king," he escaped from them. He would not work a miracle merely to excite their admiration, and refused to give them the sign from heaven, which they solicited. Not a word, which he ever uttered, nor an action, which he ever did, was calculated merely to excite applause. It seemed to be his care, not

to awaken any stupid wonder by singularity or austerity, or an imitation of the manner of popular teachers.

But there are also in the conduct of Jesus marks of disinterestedness, which are worthy of admiration. He uniformly evinces the utmost unconcern about his personal appearance and accommodation. There is one instance of this, which deserves to be pointed out. He had been engaged in earnest conversation with a Samaritan woman. "In the meanwhile," says the evangelist John, "his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." He discovers no inclination to increase his fortune, or provide for his family. He seems to take pains to show that he was completely disengaged from all family influence, because he had, in more than one instance, discovered a disposition in his relations to avail themselves of his character, and to look to him for advancement. Hence the apparent harshness of his reply to those who told him that his mother and brethren were standing without, desirous to speak with him. He answers, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold, my mother and my brethren!" This indifference to his personal or family interests shows only that there was nothing worldly-minded in his character, not that there was any want of affection or of the feelings of consanguinity. On the contrary, we may safely challenge the records of true history, or of the pathetic in fiction, to produce such specimens of inimitable tenderness and affection as are contained in our Savior's admira-

ble discourses to his disciples just before his death. "Having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end." There is in these discourses that rare mixture of piety and tenderness, which is interesting beyond any other combination of human sentiments. The man, who can read the last chapters of John without emotion, must be himself destitute of piety, or insensible to the characteristics of a superior mind under the influence of strong affection.

With his disciples, the most striking part of his conduct is, I think, his wonderful patience. He found them enslaved by prejudices as inveterate as those of the rest of his countrymen. It is true, they had left all and followed him. But wherefore? Not from any disinterested attachment to his cause; for they were, every day, expecting that he would assume the splendor of a temporal prince, and assign them the highest dignities in his triumphant administration. Not from any love of the pure doctrines he inculcated; for they appear to have continued, even to the time of his ascension, ignorant of the spiritual nature of his mission. They were, no doubt, attracted, at first, by the miracles which he exhibited. They thought it safe, to be found in the train of a teacher who seemed to have the elements at his disposal, and the laws of nature within his control. Hence our Savior found it extremely difficult to give them any just expectations of the sufferings to which they would be exposed. He would discourse to them of humility, of suffering, of contempt, of painful exposures; yet, their fancies were continually employed in sketching out plans of his future royalty and their own advancement, and, at the end of a discourse calculated to suppress all their ambitious imaginations, they could coolly ask him,

"which of them should be greatest?" Without expressing any impatience, he would repeat again his lessons of meekness, and try, by every variety of instruction, to correct their presumptuous hopes. Though they had been long with him, and had seen miracles enough to satisfy them, at least, of his ability to provide for any multitude of followers, yet they are found murmuring and anxious because they had taken no bread, and were themselves in a desert place. Jesus shows no resentment at their want of confidence, but simply asks them if they have forgotten the two instances in which he had fed thousands of followers from a few loaves.

The behavior of Jesus to Judas is, in particular, a remarkable instance of the benignity and generous patience of his character. Though he knew, from the first, that he was secretly forming his purposes of treachery, yet he forbears to expose the designs of the traitor to the rest of the little fraternity, lest, impelled by sudden indignation or a holy zeal for their Master's security, they should commit some act of rudeness, and thus drive him to some desperate attempt, or, at the least, exclude him from all opportunity of repentance and conversion. He forbears even to excite the suspicion of the disciples against him, during the whole time he was with them, that he might not interrupt the harmony which prevailed in the little circle.

In that distressing scene of his agony, when he begs them to watch with him through those moments of inconceivable horror and anguish, when he retired to pray, he returns and finds them asleep. Instead of reproving, he even finds an excuse for them. "You are fatigued, and need this refreshment. Sleep on now, and take your rest." How pure and unexceptionable must have been that par-

tiality, which he discovered, to John, the beloved disciple, when we cannot find that it awakened any jealousy in the breasts of the ambitious fraternity; but, on the contrary, this young pupil in the school of Jesus could lean on the breast of his Master without offence! And Peter, who denied him, could be melted into contrition by a passing look! Once, we are told, that Jesus wept. It was at the grave of a friend whom he had long loved. And why did he weep? Not for the loss of Lazarus; for he knew, that, with a word, he could restore him to life, and present him to his mourning sisters. But he was melted by the signs of sorrow, which they and the attending mourners discovered. He could not resist the contagion of sympathy. Mary and Martha, the disciples and the Jews, were weeping around him, and the Son of God was moved also. It is, indeed, unexampled in the history of human character, to find such industrious and active benevolence, and such consciousness of one's own powers, mingled with a passive tenderness of nature susceptible to all the emotions of sorrow.

The social character of our Savior, in his intercourse with the generation among whom he lived, deserves next to be considered. Such was our Savior's mode of life that he was obliged to be much in company. Not having "where to lay his head," he was frequently found at the tables of the rich, and in the houses of his friends.

The wonderful familiarity, to which he admitted those who approached him, and the readiness, with which he administered to the wants which were made known to him, are also striking traits in the social character of Jesus. The sense of his own superiority seems never, for a moment, to have obstructed the activity and the cheerfulness of his

benevolence. He preserved the utmost frankness with the utmost civility and condescension. It was his delight, to raise the humble, to encourage the timid, to place those, whom the proud despised, in the light of his favor, and to anticipate the requests of those who were fearful lest they should trouble him.

It appears to have been one principal aim in the public character of Jesus, to do the greatest good in the most private and unobtrusive manner. He neither strove, nor cried, nor was his voice heard in the street. Acting always upon the great principle, that mercy was better than sacrifice, he did not scruple to violate the superstitious rigors with which the scribes had corrupted the sabbatical rest; and he avoided encouraging any of those vexatious restrictions which the Jewish hierarchy had added to the original severity of the Mosaic institutions. It appears to have been his object, to reform the Jewish nation without abolishing the moral law; and we cannot conclude, from anything that is recorded of our Savior, that it will be necessary for the Jewish nation, upon embracing Christianity, to relinquish the service of the synagogue, or the moral institutions of their great lawgiver.

Lastly; our Savior has left us a pattern of conduct in extreme suffering. The prospect of his death was evidently terrible to him. His prayers betray the agony of his mind. If he had possessed any tincture of enthusiasm, or of the infatuated courage with which other martyrs have gone to the stake, we should have seen none of those symptoms of excessive sensibility, which the evangelists, without disguise, ascribe to him. Yet, with such impressions of his sufferings, he attains, at last, a state of perfect acquiescence, deep resignation, and greatness in submission.

He dies without extravagance either of hope or fear. He cries out, from the cross, "'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;' and, having said thus, he gave up the ghost."

I have selected these parts of our Savior's character with a sparing hand, and with the single view of illustrating what I have called the practicableness of his example. Every one of these qualities is not only attainable by us, but of great practical importance. His unsuspected purity of life; his unwearied and benevolent activity; his equanimity, coolness, and prudence, mingled with a fortitude which nothing could crush, and a boldness which disdained to equivocate with the wicked; his contempt for mere applause, and superiority to personal convenience; his unequalled affection for his disciples, and, to crown all, a superintending piety, which always led him to the most complete acquiescence in the will of God; these are not the qualities of enthusiasm. They do not depend either upon the supernatural character or the miraculous power of Christ; neither are they peculiar to him in his character of a teacher; but they are qualities without which no man's virtue can be sound, no man's character perfect in practice or in principle. They are qualities indispensable to man in society; they are not the excellences of a recluse, who shuns the world to keep himself pure; they are not the virtues of supererogation, like the practices of monks and ascetics; but they are the essential constituents of a substantially good character, proper for the world, as well as inseparable from greatness and elevation of mind. No man can rise from the study of this character and say, "It is very sublime and perfect; but what is that to me? The subject of it moves in a

sphere which I can never reach; he is a wonderful character, but useless as an example for the purposes of life." On the contrary, the Christian must be satisfied, that, while he remains destitute of any of those principles of excellence, which were exemplified in the life of Christ, he is essentially defective in the Christian character.

I cannot leave this subject without a few more remarks on what I have called the practicableness of the character of Christ, and the nature of his instructions. Not only did he not affect singularity in his mode of life, which is the sure companion of enthusiasm; not only did he dress, eat, converse like other men, but he evidently suffered his disciples to do the same. He supposes them to follow some profession, to be fishermen, soldiers, taxgatherers; to marry, to submit to magistrates, to carry on their usual business, and, when they could be spared from his service, to return again to their respective employments.

Our Savior's instructions are not like those of Rousseau, adapted to men in an inconceivable state of nature, to which this visionary enthusiast would recall them. They do not require men, like some of the ancient Stoics, to throw their wealth into the sea, or to inflict upon themselves unnatural austerities. But everything about Jesus, in precept and practice, is mild, cheering, great; everything is suited to the precise wants of man in society.

And in his death, — who would not submit to crucifixion, could he but die in the temper of Jesus, could he but commend his spirit with such confidence to God? He has died for us, that he might teach us how to die. My friends, may his courage fortify us, may his devotion warm our hearts, and may we never think his commandments grievous, or his example impracticable.

SERMON XVIII.

JOHN XIII. 23.

NOW THERE WAS LEANING ON JESUS' BOSOM ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES, WHOM JESUS LOVED.

WHAT an expression is this! The disciple whom Jesus loved! There was one, then, in the fraternity of apostles, whom it was not invidious to call the favorite of Jesus. This beloved Son of the almighty Father, whose whole soul was continually filled with the magnitude of the undertaking in which he was engaged for the salvation of a world, and at whom men and angels were gazing with admiration; this Jesus, who had experienced, through the whole of his ministry, nothing but scorn and ingratitude from those whom he came to save, who knew that he was soon to be sacrificed for this hard-hearted world, who was, at the point of time, to which our text refers, anticipating the defection of his dearest friends and followers, and touching upon those fearful scenes in which his holy and benevolent life was ordained painfully to terminate; in a word, this friend of man, of weak, lost, wicked man, in all ages, countries, and conditions, has himself one friend who leaned upon his bosom, and whom he best loved. What an affection must that have been which was not dormant in the breast of Jesus in such an hour as this!

Let us attend, first, to the history and character of John, and,—

Secondly, to the peculiar affection which existed between him and his Master. The reflections, which follow, may throw some light on the nature and value of that virtuous friendship which is not inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel.

It is a remarkable instance of the modesty of the New Testament writers, that they say so little of themselves. Two of the evangelists, Matthew and John, were admitted to the most familiar intercourse with Jesus, and were honored with the gift of apostleship and its supernatural endowments; yet we hear nothing from them of these distinctions. We should not know, except from traditional authority and from undesigned intimations, discovered in their writings, that they were the authors of the Gospels which now bear their names. When they speak of themselves, it is in the third person; and then they record their own faults and mistakes, some of which were of no small importance, with the most amiable ingenuousness. In their love and admiration of the Savior, whose history they were writing, they seem to have forgotten themselves; and, so completely are the historians lost in their subject, that, if they drop a hint of themselves, it seems to be rather to diminish our respect for them, and to direct it all to their Master.

In the case of John, it would be especially gratifying, to know somewhat more of the circumstances of his life, that we might discover what there was in his disposition, that made him a favorite with Jesus. His Gospel and his Epistles seem to be the breathings of a soul full of love; and we can hardly believe that it was this affectionate disciple, who would have called down fire upon the village of

the Samaritans, or who petitioned for the highest honors in his Master's expected kingdom.

It is generally supposed, that John was the youngest of the twelve disciples. We know that he and his brother James were the sons of Zebedee and Salome, who is called by one of the Fathers a daughter of Joseph, by a former wife, and, of course, related to our Lord. This circumstance, if true, very naturally accounts for the petition of their mother, that her two sons might sit on his right and left hand in his kingdom, as well as for our Savior's recommending to John, as he was expiring, the care of Mary, his own mother. The youth, the tenderness, the consanguinity of John, no doubt, then, kept him near the person of our Savior, while he lived, and generated that peculiar attachment which, in this favored disciple, would not allow him entirely to desert his Master in the hours of his anguish and dissolution. It is true, that, upon our Savior's arrest, all the disciples forsook him and fled; but John, and John alone, as far as we know, returned and stood near the cross, watching the departing spirit as it lingered on his lips, while he commended his weeping mother to this disciple, and his enemies to God. John saw the body laid in the sepulchre, he was with Peter and visited it after the resurrection, and he was present at all the appearances of our Lord to his disciples.

By this evangelist is recorded an interesting conversation, after the resurrection, in which our Savior tried the love of the fallen and repentant Peter, and predicted his martyrdom. But Peter was curious to know what should be the fate of John. "Lord," said he, "and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me. Then

went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die." Thus was Peter's curiosity rebuked, and the fate of John rendered an object of attention.

From the concurrent testimony of ecclesiastical historians, he alone of all the apostles appears to have survived the destruction of Jerusalem. There are many stories related of him by Christian writers, to which we are not authorized to give implicit belief. There is one, however, which is so characteristic, and so much in the spirit of his Epistles, that we are willing to admit it on the high authority of Jerome. "The blessed apostle John," says he, "living, at Ephesus, to extreme old age, and being difficultly carried to church in the arms of the disciples, and being unable to make a long discourse, every time they assembled, was wont to say nothing but this: 'Little children, love one another.' At length the disciples and brethren, who attended, tired with hearing so often the same thing, said, 'Sir, why do you always say this?' Who then made this answer, worthy of himself: 'Because,' says he, 'it is the Lord's command; and, if that alone be done, it is sufficient.'" *

I proposed, secondly, to illustrate the affection which subsisted between Jesus and his disciples, and especially that which he felt towards John. Turn your thoughts towards that last supper, when the Savior of the world sat surrounded by his disciples. He knew that they had followed him, hitherto, rather from interested than from affectionate motives. He knew that they expected from him gifts and distinctions which he would not and could not bestow, and were even, at that moment, mistaken as to the

* Lardner, Credibility, part ii. ch. cxiv. s. viii. 4 (3).

nature and true character and purpose of his mission. He knew, also, that they would forsake him, as soon as he was completely in the power of his enemies; that one of them would deny him; that another would betray him; and that all, as soon as their favorite expectations were disappointed, would prove timid and faithless. The very disciple, who was leaning on his bosom, and who loved him best, he foresaw, would yield to his fears; and yet, with all this knowledge of his desertion, his love to this little family, not one of whom had any claims upon his affection, was undiminished, and stronger than death. He pours out for them that affectionate prayer which the angels, who waited, listening, around him, might carry with them, weeping, to heaven.

What a soul must his have been, my hearers, which was, at the same moment, filled with that vast object, the redemption of a world, and yet had a place left for twelve such disciples! which could discover such tenderness for these timid and ignorant companions, just as he was himself entering on a scene of suffering, the solitary contemplation of which, in the garden of Gethsemane, threw him, afterwards, into such a fearful agony! But, in the presence of these twelve friends, he seemed to be thinking of nothing but of the sufferings which they were to encounter, of the death which they were to suffer in his cause, and the distressing uncertainty and terror into which they would be thrown, when they saw his fate was inevitable. He spends, therefore, the last moments of his most precious life in elevating and fortifying the humble minds of these men, in imparting to their weak spirits a portion of his own views and hopes; nay, more, in praying for them, that their strength might not fail, that they might be one with him as

he was one with his Father. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." Oh, how enviable was the lot of the young John, to lean on such a breast as this, to be the friend of such a friend!

In the life of Jesus Christ we see the highest state of perfection, in which the particular and universal affections can coëxist in the same heart. We see a scope of love, which embraced the whole interests of humanity, and yet contracted itself to the friendship of an individual; a spirit which could weep, at the same time, for the miseries of a world, and for the impending destruction of a single city; and which yet, with all this enlargement of views and strength of sympathy, retained the most exquisite sensibility to the personal sufferings and infirmities of our sensitive nature. When we look at the example of Jesus, our perplexing disputes about selfishness and disinterestedness, about universal and particular affections, seem, at once, resolved; inconsistencies and difficulties vanish; and we see how, in a well regulated mind, all the affections, private and public, may be preserved in perfect harmony, each in its proper sphere, exercise, and intensity, never interfering, because properly subordinated to each other, and all happily adjusted to the nature and circumstances of such a being as man.

The only difference, except in degree, which appears to have existed in these affections, as they were found in Jesus, and as they are found in his disciples, is, that, in the latter, the most general affections are derived, at last, by degrees, from the more private. These, in our minds, are first generated by the circumstances in which we find ourselves from our birth. But in our Savior the order appears to have been reversed; for in his mind every act of love

and kindness, every limited exercise of affection, seems to be only a sensible expression of that general philanthropy with which his mighty soul was originally and continually filled. What in us is always imperfect, because formed by insensible degrees, seems in him to have been always perfect and unlimited. Ours is the affection of mortals; his was that love of God, "which passeth knowledge." It was the same spirit, which, although in that well known hour of solitude and prayer it seemed absorbed in the dread of crucifixion, so that the sweat ran down like drops of blood, through anguish and sorrow, — for he felt as a man, — yet, when he was in the actual horrors of crucifixion, and, probably, at the period of the most exquisite bodily pain, caused the strength of his filial affection to burst through his anguish, and commend his mother to his friend John, that mother in whose presence he had lately said, with apparent insensibility, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, he cannot be my disciple."

As we proceed, we find him cherishing the fondest feelings towards John, his relation, and towards Lazarus and his two sisters. He was in the habit of taking Peter and James and John apart with him, in those seasons, when he was to enjoy and suffer most. Thus we discover the nature of his attachment, that it was really a particular fondness for these individuals, especially for John. Yet he could say to these very favorites, "If ye love them who love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those who love them."

If we ascend yet higher in the scale of his affections, we discover an ardent degree of patriotism in his pathetic strains of lamentation over a city which had rejected him.

"O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! hadst thou but known, in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! How often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings! but ye would not!" And yet, while he was thus lamenting the fate of his countrymen, his imagination was filled with the grand forethought of the innumerable multitude who should come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, to sit down in the kingdom of God, while his own people should be cast out.

The reflections, which we shall offer you on this subject, are not many.

In the first place, how astonishing is the inconsiderateness of those unbelievers who have attempted to raise an objection to the religion of Christ, from the circumstance, that the gospel nowhere expressly enjoins the virtues of patriotism and friendship! This objection was first suggested, in his insidious manner, by the Earl of Shaftesbury; and, what is yet more extraordinary, Soame Jenyns, in an eloquent defence of Christianity, has produced the very omission of these virtues, as one proof of the divine origin of the gospel morality, merely because they are qualities so much esteemed among men, and, therefore, would not have been omitted in any scheme of moral precepts, of which men were the framers.

With the virtue of patriotism we are not, at present, concerned; but it is, indeed, extraordinary, that any one, after having read the history of our Savior, should represent either of these virtues as irreconcilable with the spirit, or unprovided for in the system of Christianity. Did they not remember that touching scene at the grave of Lazarus, that friend whom Jesus loved? Did they not remem-

ber how he wept, so that even the Jews exclaimed, "Behold, how he loved him"? Could they have remembered his tender consolation of the two afflicted sisters, and the domestic endearments in which he shared with that interesting family, after he had restored their brother to life, and yet could they say that Jesus esteemed these particular attachments false and fictitious virtues?

But it is said, that friendship is nowhere expressly recommended to us in the New Testament. True, it is not; and here, I think, is a singular proof of the thorough knowledge which our Savior possessed of the human heart, and especially of the nature of our virtuous affections. For is it not easy to see that it would have been absurd to enjoin particular friendship upon any man, as a necessary part of his Christian or moral character? That which is peculiar to this attachment, as it is distinguished from general goodwill, is not anything which depends upon a man's voluntary exertions. No man can go out into the world and say, "I will have a friend." This, like other connexions in life, often depends upon circumstances beyond our control. It depends not merely upon a man's general benevolence of character, but upon a fortunate consent of affections and harmony of interests, which, a man may live long in the world, and not be so happy as to meet. It requires such a concert of tastes and passions, such a length and frequency of intercourse, such a candor and unreservedness of mind, as we may not easily find or command in thousands whom yet we greatly esteem, and in many more with whom we are disposed to live on the common terms of peace and good neighborhood. To have enjoined, then, a social attachment like this, as a subject of duty, or as an essential obligation on every man, whatever may be his circumstances, is an absurdity of

which Jesus and his disciples could not have been guilty; and yet this omission has been charged upon the friend of John and Lazarus as a defect in his religion. Many, I doubt not, are the Christians, who have passed through this world of frequent changes and various characters, and yet have never chanced to find a real friend. Many more are there who have wept over the grave of some one, long known and loved; but, alas! as they had not the power to awake him from his slumbers, so, too, they have not had the good-fortune afterwards to replace him.

The second reflection, which I shall make, is, that, if we would practise this virtue, if it must be so named, in all its purity, and enjoy our fondest attachments in perfection, we must call in to our aid the religion of Christ. Tell us not of the heroic friendships of ancient story, when it was thought generous, to sacrifice a whole nation for an injury to a friend, and when the duties of this attachment were exalted above all other obligations, and allowed to break every other tie, and benevolence itself was lost in the pretended despotism of private love. Tell us not of those modern connexions which demand of us, in honor, to sacrifice one man's life to vindicate another's name from false imputations, or of the numerous pitiful unions of wicked men, for purposes of interest or indulgence, conviviality or temporary convenience. These have as little to do with affection as with religion. True Christian regard is as different from all this as lust from pure love, or bodily strength from real courage. The only perfect union of minds will be that which is animated, corrected, and matured by the evangelical spirit of Christianity. Why? Because their faith and hopes are not only one through their present destiny, but because man has interests and hopes

in eternity, dearer and greater than any temporal well-being, and that union of minds, into which eternity enters not, and makes no part of their common hopes, must be essentially defective; because this idea, rendering the affection, which it influences, more sublime and more interesting, must make it superior to any temporary union of views and purposes, how many years soever may have cemented it. You anticipate the company of your friend to-morrow; the Christian not to-morrow only, but forever. He does not lose sight of him through the long range of a future existence.

Further; the essential temper of Christianity is self-distrust; and it is the very charm of friendship, to love to repose on another's knowledge and affection. The greatest foe of grace is pride; and pride, also, cannot coëxist with generous, undisguised, unqualified affection. Again; it is the object of the gospel, to wear off the dissocial points of our character, to unite our conflicting interests and hostile passions, and to endue us with that temper which "is not easily provoked," and which "thinketh no evil." It is, also, the tendency of our religion, to exhaust those sources of jealousy and distrust, which so often embitter our tenderest and dearest connexions. A Christian, knowing his own infirmities, will not expect too much, even from him he loves best. He has none of that pride which takes offence at fancied neglects; and he sees the folly and the sin of requiring from another such an illiberal attachment to himself as shall confine all his sacrifices to him, and exclude the rest of the world from his attention. It, therefore, appears to me, that, to make friendship perfect, Christianity was necessary; because this alone teaches us the sinfulness of wishing for such a monopoly of affection as is demanded by

some narrow minds, and is so contrary to the genius of the gospel.

Why do we see so many ruptures of amity in the circle of our acquaintance? Is it not, in many cases, from a selfish and excessive jealousy of affection, inconsistent with the true sentiment of benevolence? Still further; the true Christian is the best master of his passions, and thus he avoids a perpetual danger, on which the most ardent minds are apt to fall asunder, and their love to change to aversion. It is a painful thought, to fall out by the way, when we have the long path of eternity to travel together.

In fine, where the affection between two minds is not influenced by a sense of a present and all-gracious Father in Heaven; where the tomb, when it has closed upon one of them, is thought to have separated them forever; where they have no communion of mind upon the most interesting of human contemplations, God, Jesus, and the life to come; where the all-sanctifying grace of the gospel does not mould their desires, correct and unite their dispositions in humility and Christian love, there may be fondness, there may be satisfaction, there may be partiality, but there is not friendship, such as it existed between Jesus and John; such, in fact, as that for which Jesus prayed, when he said, "Holy Father, keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are."

My Christian friends, if you have found one who leans on your breast, and you are not afraid that he should listen to the secrets that disturb it; if wisdom and virtue have directed you to him; if ardent love of truth, generous accommodation to each other, fear of God, attachment to his gospel, and hope of everlasting life have bound you together, cherish such a union of minds. The grace of

Jesus Christ will temper every desire of your hearts, and mellow your affections by the gentle influences of his gospel. Your interests will more closely intertwine, as you draw nearer to the grave, and become more detached from the surrounding distractions of the world; and the tomb, when it closes upon you, shall not separate you; for, as God is true, "them, that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him." Jesus, who once raised a friend from the tomb, will not let it close forever on those who love him, and who love like him.

SERMON XIX.

LUKE XVI. 2.

GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF THY STEWARDSHIP.

ONCE more a day has arrived which reminds us of the astonishing flight of our time. And of what time? Of that brief space in which is crowded the whole scene of our mortal probation; that momentary space in which is determined the everlasting destiny of man. I tremble, when I think that we are now taking an eternal leave of one more of those few years that are allotted to the life of man. "Man fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not." Let us employ the fleeting moments of this day in reflecting upon the poverty of human existence, before it escapes and shuts up forever the closing year.

Why is it, that the points and bounds of our passing time, when they present themselves, affect us so unpleasantly, and spread such a gloom over our meditations? Is it, that we are not aware of the approach of this last day of another year? No, surely; for every departing week, every setting sun, has given us an admonition of this day, and has prepared us for its arrival. Is it, because this day informs us how old we are, and that we are so much nearer to the close of life? No, surely; for every other day has told us the same truth; and, besides this, who is there but imagines that he has many years to live? No.

my friends; it is, because this day awakens our sleeping recollection, and brings up the story of our lives. It is, because this day interrogates us, with more than common solemnity, "What account can you give of the year that is past?" It summons us to look into our characters, our families; to examine the posture of our affairs with regard to the great objects of our existence on earth; and something whispers that all is not right, and that, if we can shut our eyes without apprehension, it is no longer without peril. This, this it is, which gives this day its terrors. The sun rises as brightly, the face of nature is the same, the provision for our life is as sure and regular, as ever; but yet a voice seems to issue from the closing portals of the year, "Give an account of thy stewardship," and a secret alarm steals over the mind at the consequences of our delay.

Since, then, we have reached, by God's blessing, so favorable a spot for reflection, let us devote this opportunity to severe self-examination. To assist you in this duty, which, though painful, must not, therefore, be avoided, allow me to suggest to you some subjects of inquiry. In doing this, I would not assume the office of an inquisitor, nor even that of a monitor; but only give some refreshment to your memories, and some direction to your meditations.

In this review of our character and situation, we must, if we would do it usefully and effectually, limit ourselves to some definite periods of time, and portions of our conduct. There is nothing more proper than to confine it to the year that is past, and to consider the state of our minds and hearts, our domestic, our social, and our religious condition.

In the first place, when we examine the improvement we have made, at any time, in mind and disposition, there presents itself to our view a meagre account of our mental treasures, and an humbling sense of our defects of temper. Do we find that we have supplied, during the last year, the chasms and vacuities of our knowledge? or are we yet as ignorant as ever of many things most important to acquire? Have we set apart a portion of our leisure to the cultivation of our understandings? Have the difficulties, for instance, which have hitherto obstructed our faith, or kept alive our prejudices against Christianity, been honestly examined and fairly removed? or do we remain as ignorant of God and of his gospel as at any former period? Though many incidents, we meet with, arouse a temporary interest in religion, have we taken pains to preserve this interest, and to follow the light which has sometimes darted across our path? or have we sunk back again into the darkness which usually envelops our meditations? If, on the contrary, while we have increased in years, the memory and the sentiment of the most important truths in religion have been fading away, can we be satisfied with such a state of mind, even though on other subjects we may have learnt much, and have added to our experience in politics, literature, and the conduct of life? The subjects relating to our religion and to our duties are vast and impressive, and they cannot be learnt at a glance. Let us not go through another year in all the presumptuousness of ignorance; upon subjects, too, which, in a single hour, may burst upon our unprepared minds with all the terrible certainty of another life.

Again; can we discover, during the last year, any melioration of our tempers, and any improvement of our habits?

We have formerly suffered much sordid attachment to wealth. Are we disengaged from this slavery? We have sometimes felt the stings of envy, and the troubles of vanity, peevishness, and discontent. Are we yet free from these miserable tormentors? or are we, at this moment, suffering as much as ever from envy, pride, disappointment, and unsatisfied desires? Are the resentments, which we once felt, at last extinguished? and has the coldness, which we have indulged towards some men, given place to more cordial sentiments? The thought of death has, perhaps, occurred to us often as we have grown older. Do we look forward to it with more tranquillity? or are we still putting far away the evil day, afraid to think of it, and trembling lest it should arrest us in the midst of a life of acknowledged sinfulness? God has continued us another year. But have we broken off those doubtful habits which our consciences did not approve? or have we, this year, begun those habits of personal religion, which we have before neglected, or renewed and invigorated those which have been omitted? If we have not kept up our private devotions, if, by being more immersed in occupation, we have lost sight of God, now is the time to call up these solemn subjects, to repair these alarming defects, and, with truly penitent hearts, to acknowledge the afflicting truth, that we have fallen off from the only support of our unworthy lives, and to return to him with humiliation and prayer.

In the second place, let us examine our domestic character, and see how we have fulfilled, during the last year, this social relation. Far be it from me to indulge an idle curiosity; I would only lead you to look towards that quarter, where you will be likely to make the most important discoveries. Are you satisfied, then, with your habits of

domestic life? Is a large portion of your leisure faithfully devoted to those parental obligations for which you must account with God, the great Parent, and with the great family of which you are a part? You have sometimes, I doubt not, resolved, with true affection, to devote yourselves in earnest to the religious cultivation of the minds of your children. Has this been regularly and seriously undertaken; or have your attentions to them been slight and unproductive of good, because you were soon weary of the task, and finally relinquished, because it seemed burdensome and vexatious? Another year they have lived under your roof; another year has exposed them to new temptations. Have you done anything for them, for which they will thank you forever? Is your family a scene of real quiet, of contentment, of intellectual pleasure, of habitual religion? or are your occupations at home frivolous, your pleasures unsparingly introduced, your expenses lavished without rule, your time dissipated without economy, and your home the theatre of foolish and unprofitable occupations, all introduced to banish thought and solitude, and make you forget that you are at home? Do you know the habits your children are forming, the examples they see, the companions they cherish, and the employments in which they engage, when they are out of your sight? Have you, this year, introduced any improvements in your domestic arrangements, by which you have supplied former defects and corrected former errors? Is God, the God of your fathers, the God of your children, on whom you depend, every hour, for your own life, and the lives of those who are dearest to you in the world, — is he yet invoked within your walls?

In the third place, let us examine our social character

Within the last year the wealth of some of you has, perhaps, increased, and your means of doing good have, of course, been extended. Has your bounty, also, been enlarged? Instead of applying, this year, your superfluous wealth to the purposes of your avarice or your pleasure, have you devoted it more sacredly than before to higher and more generous purposes? Can you, amid your reflections, repose sweetly on the instances of real good which you have been the means of producing? or does the last year present the miserable blank of a selfish and worldly life?

When we consider, too, how various and frequent, within a single year, are the means of doing good, our memory must reproach us with some omissions which nothing but necessity could excuse. Is no one now suffering from our neglect? Has no one been wounded by our ill treatment, distressed by our carelessness, or seduced by our example? Have we made honest and full reparation for the wrongs which we have either wilfully or inadvertently committed? Have we been reconciled to those with whom we have quarrelled, and are we now at peace with our neighbors and with our own hearts?

Are you satisfied with the last year's discharge of your various social duties, as a citizen, a friend, a professional man, a supporter of the good institutions of society? Have you withheld no one's dues, sacrificed no man's good name, equivocated in no one's cause, imposed on no one's credulity, stood in the way of no one's happiness? Have you never shrunk from your duty, because it was difficult or dangerous; and drawn back, when you might save another from ruin, lest you should expose yourself to censure or to trouble?

Lastly; how stands your religious character? Are you more devotional and heavenly-minded in your dispositions, more truly religious in your habits? When you have attended on the public worship of God, has it been with a more solemn sense of the presence of the great God whom we here approach? or do you still regard it as a practice due only to your sense of decorum, and required by the habits of the community, a practice which you omit, when you can? The sense of the obligation of public worship is entirely distinct from the pleasure which you may happen to receive from a preacher; and you are not to measure your true character, as worshippers of God, by the curiosity, or any other selfish motive, which may bring you here. Have you taken care to correct any impropriety in your attendance on these duties of prayer and praise to God? For the real character of men's minds will discover itself in many neglects and irregularities, in which a truly serious man will never allow himself, although the world may, notwithstanding, give him the praise of reputable deportment.

One year more is just going, and with it how many golden opportunities are taking their flight, and you call after them in vain! Are you satisfied with the religious progress you have made? Of your prayers how many have fallen ineffectual from your lips, and how many, from your wandering habit of mind, have never reached the throne of God? Can you take pleasure in the progress of the divine life in your souls, in the new views that open upon you, in the new hopes that cheer you, in the peace of your hearts in communion with God? You have, perhaps, had some afflictions; how have you improved them? some disappointments; how have you met them? some new intimations of your own departure from the world; how have they operated upon your thoughts?

Every man must appropriate these inquiries to his own peculiar circumstances. They are hints only, too general to make a deep impression, without our personal attention. Do you call it impertinence in the preacher? The examination must, at some time, be made; and what opportunity is more favorable than the present? It will be inconceivably dangerous for us, to live on, from year to year, always deferring this scrutiny. Our perplexity will, every day, increase, our debts will accumulate, and yet the voice, "Give an account of thy stewardship," will be heard by every man. And will there be another opportunity? Thou, Lord, only knowest! thou, before whom all nations shall be gathered, and the books must be opened, where every man must read, at the same moment, his past life and his future destination; at a moment, also, when all our prayers, and all our remorse, will not change the solemn account.

The tremendous sum of our unworthiness is not to be just glanced at and forgotten. It cannot, and, as God lives, it will not, be forgotten, though we should continue to practise, to the end of a long life, this same formality. The sins of this year are added to the last, as those of the last were added to those of the preceding. What, then, is the state of our religious condition? You, who have lived twenty, thirty, forty years, and more, in this world of God's, who have been supported by him every moment, who have nothing which you have not received from him, nothing for which you must not account before his presence hereafter, think, I beseech you, of the folly and danger of longer neglecting to acknowledge him, to pray to him, to fear him, to serve him with all the powers which he has given you. If you have never seriously thought of this,

think of it now. The ground, on which you stand, is treacherous ; it may, in an instant, yield, and plunge you into an abyss of irrecoverable sorrow. "Choose you, this day, whom you will serve," and presume not that God's mercy will draw out, to an indefinite length, your quivering thread of life. You, that have thought the wonderful gift of his Son Jesus unworthy of your attention, let not the new year begin without finding you approaching this merciful Savior. "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion."

Those of you, who, with a sincere faith in the gospel of Jesus, and with a general conviction of your duty to live to his honor, have discovered, this year, great defects in your services, and who feel oppressed with a sense of the little progress you have made, come, and let us now determine, with full purpose of heart, — on what? Ah! the vast field of duty is so immense! and yet, if God be for us, who can defeat us? Let us resolve, then, upon a more faithful cultivation of our minds, more serious reading and less amusement, more thought and less vanity, more serious inquiry after truth and less vain speculation. Let us sacredly, unreservedly, and in opposition to all the sneers of the profligate part of the world, resolve, before God, to devote this holy time to the instruction of our families, and of ourselves, too, if we have not yet begun it. Let no plea of business or of pleasure prevent this employment of our Sundays' leisure. Mark out for yourselves, and for your children, a course of religious instruction ; and, in the fear and love of God, commence the great duty of prayer, and persevere in it to the end.

Determine that you will, this year, look around you to discover where you may retrench your unprofitable expens-

es upon mere vanities and pleasures. Let not the means of doing good accumulate upon you, only to increase the weight of your condemnation, as if you were enriched only to swell an enormous treasure, or to fill a greater space in the eyes of an envious world. Be continually on your guard against that hardness of heart, which constant attention to the secular employments of life is sure to produce. Look out for objects of bounty and for channels of beneficence. Never imagine that you have done your duty, while there is a single want of body or mind, to which you can have access, unrelieved. Resolve to relinquish, at once, any habits in your domestic or public life, of whose innocence your conscience gives you a doubt. Break off, with all the prudence in your power, any ensnaring connexions, any unworthy and dangerous friendships. Let not a false shame prevent you, for a single day, from giving up any modes of life, which, however popular or reputable, are inconsistent with the life of a serious Christian. Decidedly and instantly oppose any private practices which are not perfectly reconcilable with the laws of God, and with domestic peace and purity; and take your firm stand against the introduction of any public amusements by which the order and good habits of society may be unhappily affected.

Let not the old excuses be again brought forward, to justify you in the neglect of institutions which you acknowledge to be useful, and which you believe to be the command of God. Reform whatever there is to be reformed in your attendance on public worship, and in your observance of the exercises of religion.

Let us begin the year with an humble and penitent acknowledgment of our sins, defects, and degeneracies, and

pray to God for pardon. Let us set out, with confidence in his aid, upon a new career of more effective obedience. We cannot, it is true, resolve upon everything at once; our deficiencies and sins are too numerous to be reformed by one act of solemn determination; but we can all fix upon some portion of character and conduct, and thither bend our resolution; and, at least, we can all resolve to relinquish any evil habit which we are conscious of indulging. Though it is dangerous to promise much that we will do, we can all determine, before God and our hearts, what we will abandon.

But, my friends, what have I been recommending? Resolutions for another year, for the rest of life, when it may be, that some of us shall not see another day; many of us, not another year! I wonder at the temerity, the confidence of man! Spare us, good Lord! Cut us not off in the midst of our days. Give us another year, that we may repent, and serve thee better.

SERMON XX.

PSALM L. 21.

THOU THOUGHTEST THAT I WAS ALTOGETHER SUCH AN ONE AS THYSELF.

RELIGION, as far as it is, in any way, distinct from morals, has reference to God. If there were no God at the head of the universe, there could be no religion; because it is implied in every definition which can be given of a religious man, that his conduct is governed by his sense of God's approbation. Of course, as far as the characters of men differ who believe in the existence of such a Supreme Being, the different ideas, which they entertain of this Being, must lie at the root of the diversities in their characters. Hence, if you follow men up to their most secret persuasions, you will find that their notions of God's character are variously modified. If we all conceived of it exactly alike, it would be impossible, that such varieties should exist in our speculations and practice. It becomes, therefore, to every man, a subject of important inquiry, whether he has not, in some manner, figured to his own mind a being like himself, and placed him at the head of the universe, instead of the unchangeable and perfect Jehovah.

It is true, that the only ideas, which we can form of the moral perfections of God, must be originally derived from

our conceptions of these qualities as we find them in human nature; that is, in ourselves and others. Hence it follows, that every man's notions on this subject will be more or less accurate, according to the purity and truth of his moral ideas and sentiments. For it is only by exalting to the highest degree of excellence those qualities which we love or approve in men, that we can conceive of God at all, as a good and moral Governor. Hence he, that has no just conceptions of the true nature of moral excellence, must form unworthy conceptions of God; and hence, too, it naturally follows, that in proportion to the purity of our own minds will be the justness of our thoughts of our Maker. In this view of the subject it may also be said, that every man makes a God for himself, insensibly degrading or exalting the object of his adoration, according to the cast of his own wishes or character. This is a consideration fraught with the most solemn consequences.

In conformity with these remarks, we find, in the history of the world, the gods of those nations, who have had no revelation, fashioned according to the characters of the times and people. In the rude and warlike ages of the world, their gods were as quarrelsome as themselves. They were, indeed, little more than a race of stronger men; and the moral ideas of mankind were so few and so imperfect that strength was the only quality thoroughly understood and really reverenced, even in Divinity. The barbarous nations of the north ascribed to their supreme divinity the most cruel and bloodthirsty propensities; he was appeased with the scent of human gore, and gratified with the sacrifice of the most innocent victims. As society became more luxurious and effeminate, the gods were also sensualized and enervated; till, at last, even in the times of re-

finement and philosophy, it was thought the greatest perfection and felicity of the Godhead, to have no concern with the affairs of this world, but to pass a life of the most senseless inactivity. This was the philosophy of Epicurus.

For these strange misapprehensions of the Deity there is some excuse in the want of a written revelation which should fully declare the character of God. The proofs of it, which are found in the works of nature, are not easily apprehended by an uncultivated mind. When God was seen only in the clouds and heard in the wind, the clouds often obscured his majesty, and the wind brought only indistinct murmurs of a mighty power. To us there is no such apology; and, if we think unworthily of God, it argues some perversion of the mind, in which we cannot be blameless. That eye must be diseased which cannot now see the sun of righteousness travelling in his strength and unclouded in his lustre.

It shall be my object in this discourse, to inquire into the sources of the most common misapprehensions of God, and to lead you to examine your own notions on this subject.

The first source of misapprehension is found, where we should least of all expect it, in Scripture itself. There are many, who form their ideas of their Maker from detached passages of the Bible, without consulting the general tenor of the volume. They seize upon particular texts, and dwell on them with a kind of superstitious partiality, as if they were glad to find the picture of a Being such as they had feared or fancied. From the texts, which proclaim the mercy of God and the extent of the redemption by Jesus, they figure to themselves a God who is all fondness or compassion; who is too gentle to punish, too kind to look with displacency on any of his creatures, how corrupt and

wicked soever they may be. Thus they frame, from a few unconnected texts, a system in which God is introduced only to make men happy, whether they are fit for it or not, and the awful and pure Majesty of Heaven is changed into a doating and foolish parent.

Others seem to search the Scriptures only to find proofs of arbitrary power and irresistible determination in the Deity. To him they ascribe unconditional decrees, and to themselves an invincible fatality of action, which leave them without blame, or power, or accountability. Destitute of that spirit of devotion, which a just sense of our dependence is calculated to preserve, their notions of God's government are adapted only to excuse themselves in sin, or make them presumptuous in religion. Because God controls their fate, they think that they have nothing to do with it; and, though, in the business of the world, they are as sensible as other men that their condition must depend upon their exertions, in the affairs of religion they are willing to believe that everything is fixed, everything immutable, bound down in the chains of an unrelenting fate, which leaves them without the means to conquer or to fly. "I am only what God has made me, I must be what he has determined." But why do they never recollect that it is his determination, that we should be moral beings, placed here for probation, whose condition must depend always upon character? It is only from a strange partiality to individual texts, that we see some men reposing in the deceitful dream of an Elysium of universal and unconditional salvation, and others worshipping a God who looks with complacency upon the eternal and unalterable torments of one half of a race of human creatures whom he has unconditionally reprobated from the beginning of time.

Another source of misapprehension is to be found in the partial views which we take of God's providence. There are men who, from the very regularity with which the universe proceeds, conclude against the government of a supreme controller. They have seen no miraculous interpositions, they have witnessed no disturbance of the common course of causes and effects. Hence they conclude that God has never interfered in the quietude of nature, that the story of miracles is a fabrication, and the proofs of revelation the dream of enthusiasts. They see, too, in the world, the judgments of God against the wicked unaccountably delayed, and the happiness of the good strangely interrupted; crimes triumphing in unpunished presumption, and humility and integrity groaning under the persecution of the impious. "All things," in their estimation, "come alike to all;" and, if they admit the necessity of a prime mover, they admit an agent who is of little more consequence in the universe than the spring in the movements of a watch, which serves to keep the parts in motion, but which knows not how irregularly the hands may point, or how widely the action of the parts may be disarranged. They fondly imagine that what to them appears confusion would appear so to God, if he observed it; and, therefore, they would place him out of sight of the scenes and changes of this state of things.

There is another class of men, who judge of the character of God from particular events which happen to themselves or others. Where their thoughts are full of some darling projects, and their zeal influenced by some favorite set of opinions, they exalt themselves into the ministers of God's especial designs, and every unexpected occurrence, which favors their plans, they fondly call a special inter-

position of his providence. They think they "see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending" to minister to their purposes. They make God a party to their passions, and think he is altogether such an one as themselves. They construe their success into a proof of God's approbation, and pronounce those atheists, who will not discern the steps of God's providence in that little foot-path which their vain imaginations have marked out for him. In short, they would place the Divinity within the little circle of their own society, where he frowns or smiles according to their wishes. Next to the mischief of gross impiety is the mischief of favoritism, or, rather, of superstitious pretensions to the interpositions of God's providence.

There are others, who judge of God from some particular misfortune which has happened to themselves. Perhaps he has not granted answers to their importunate prayers, and then they think him inexorable; or he has blasted their hopes, and brought them down from the proud eminence of their prosperous circumstances, to dwell in the low and damp vale of misery. There they see the Divinity through mists; God is regarded with fear, as the sun, in the language of Milton,

> "Looks through the horizontal misty air,
> And sheds disastrous twilight."

Then they venture to arraign his goodness, or imbibe unworthy conceptions of his benevolence. They say God has no mercy laid up for them; and they fall into the most distressing melancholy, or the most dreadful impiety and unconcern. There are also men who, from a long course of remarkable successes, or from some extraordinary preservations, seem to think that God has given them a pledge of perpetual security. They believe in what they call

their fortune; as if their Maker had left them to some tutelary genius, or given them a commission of uninterrupted good-fortune.

In the enlarged mind of a Christian all these are unworthy conceptions of the Deity. He dares not judge of the character of God from single events, or from any one confined sphere of his operations. He knows "these are but parts of his ways;" and that a very "little portion is heard" by man of Him in whose sight "a thousand years are but as yesterday, when it is past, or as a watch in the night."

A third source of our misapprehension of God is to be found in our own peculiar temperament. The native cast of every man's mind, in some degree, tinges all his moral qualities, and the same virtues and vices are not precisely alike in any human beings. Hence, according to our predominant tempers, will our ideas of God be modified, and we shall think unworthily of the Divinity, in the same proportion that we mingle, in our conceptions of him, the peculiarities of our own affections, passions, and imperfections. For even the best of men must take their notions of the perfection of any moral quality from that form in which it exists, however imperfectly, in their own minds, and with this individual hue will they transfer it to the character of God. Thus the Ethiopians, it is said, when they would paint their gods in the highest style of beauty, colored them black, simply because it was their own native complexion.

This part of my subject is, I know, difficult and abstruse. It is almost impossible to define those shades of difference, which exist in every man's mind, and affect his notions of justice, mercy, goodness, and wisdom. But, as far as these

varieties exist, are our best notions of God affected; and, perhaps, we are not sufficiently on our guard that we do not worship an idol of our imaginations, when we profess to worship the all-perfect and unchangeable Divinity. Thus there are some men whose temperament is melancholy, and whose religion comes to them enveloped in a mantle of funereal gloom. They think that God always looks upon the world as they do, on the darkest side; and that he can find nothing on earth to contemplate with complacency. They form to themselves a Being who looks with abhorrence upon those pleasures which they see with disgust or pity, and thus, with the sincerest intention of honoring Jehovah, place him always in a light in which they only can contemplate him with advantage. The mild cheerfulness of the nature of others sometimes leads them to dress the Divinity in smiles. If they are sensible themselves of the purity of God's character, yet they are willing to have in others the belief that he is only love. They rejoice in the happiness of God's creation; but they forget that all happiness is not virtue, and that God cannot love those who love not him, nor make any blessed in the enjoyment of himself against their will and ruling passion. They forget that it is hazardous, to attribute to God the weakness of their own good-nature. They cannot bear to see others unhappy; God cannot endure to see them unworthy of happiness. The disposition of the famous Genevan reformer, that truly great man, was remarkably stern and inflexible. He seemed to believe that God pursued his own glory in the same way and by the same means in which his zeal and haughtiness prompted him to pursue it. Hence the severity of his system, the unrelenting attributes with which he loves to surround his God, and the pleasure

with which he continually dwells on the sovereignty of God, an attribute which seems to be, in his mind, little else than the unqualified power of doing as he pleases. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself," might here be justly objected; and it has been objected, I believe, with considerable effect.

There are other men, of a natural timidity of temper, who never consider God as pleased with a rational and manly piety, but who seem rather to deprecate his displeasure by trifling and superstitious performances, such as could be demanded only by a weak and capricious deity. Their services seem to be offered by way of atonement. They put up their prayers with punctuality, rather lest God should be offended than in the spirit of true devotion; and, though strictly conscientious in their whole character, they do not seem to have attained to that state of "perfect love," which "casteth out fear." They have not that "spirit of adoption, whereby we may cry, Abba! Father!"

A fourth source of our unworthy conceptions of the Deity is to be found in our wicked lusts and corrupt habits. No man, who is the slave of any favorite sin, can remain easy in the apprehension, that God regards him with the same disapprobation that he regards himself. Hence he must either accommodate his notions of God to his own standard, or else he must live in perpetual fear and dissatisfaction. It is not doubtful, which of these alternatives he will choose. This is the secret of all the atheism in the world. God must be dispossessed of his authority, and the world given up to the sport of human crimes, that these men may live securely. Hence, if there are any notions of Deity, which seem to favor their irreligion, they easily find arguments in their support, and their understanding is

sophisticated by their lusts. They greedily embrace the opinion, that God, so pure, so infinite, so almighty as he must be, thinks it unworthy of his majesty to attend to the minutiæ of human conduct. The opinion of a moral government of the world they reject, as the fiction of priests. God, surely, will not disturb the dead silence of the grave to awaken mortals like them to retribution! God, surely, cannot feel such an interest in the concerns of this little planet, this atom of creation, as to think it necessary to vindicate the honors of his holiness by making such an insignificant creature as I am miserable for my sins! Presumptuous man! It is no greater condescension in the Lord of innumerable worlds, to stoop to observe your most secret sins, than it is for him to receive the homage of the seraph that stands on the highest step of his throne. The darkest recesses of your lusts are to him as clearly visible as the lightest mansion in heaven. Think, O thou careless man! that, if a single sin, you have committed, were out of his cognizance, the perfection of his government would be as really impaired as if the crimes of a conqueror were unregarded, or a world crushed, and he perceived it not. The disorder of the universe would be as great, if you could go unpunished, as if a Nero or Caligula had escaped his retribution, as if the whole world of nature were unbalanced, and systems rushed together in chaos. And, on the other hand, the equity of his government would be as much impaired, if the sigh of a single saint were lost to his ear, his omniscience would be as much limited, if a sinner repented and God knew it not, as if a new sun were to break out and he observed not its brightness. It is only in the hope of annihilation, that God can be safely disregarded. And even to that vacant gulf a ray of divine power darts in, and it is no longer a void.

I close this subject, then, by offering you the following considerations. Remember, that, in proportion to the purity of your own hearts, will be the justness of your thoughts of God. The more like God you become, the more — I would say it with reverence — will you enter into his character. And, without this conformity of heart and conduct to his will, your knowledge of the Divinity will be nothing but a cold and barren speculation. To what purpose is it, that you can enter into all the proofs of his eternity, omnipotence, omniscience, and infinity, or arrange a demonstration of God's attributes with the utmost perspicuity; to what purpose talk of him in language worthy of his greatness, and become eloquent in the praises of Jehovah; if you remain untouched with the moral excellence of his character, if God is not the object of your love, if there exists in your heart a secret disgust at his government, and an aversion to his purity? The mind of such a man is like a cold and empty chamber hung round with the maps and figures of the different parts of the earth, which he has seen and known only in these delineations; regions of which he knows nothing by personal knowledge, where he has no friends, no attachments, no hopes, no ties of interest. If God is not our God, it is of little purpose, that we believe that such a Being exists. But, my friends, if your hearts are frequently in communion with him, you will have an eternal friend in this awful Being. If you can enjoy everything, which you meet, as his gift, every creature in existence will furnish you with new proofs of his goodness. God will enter into all your thoughts. No event, however unexpected, will weaken your trust in him. What you cannot now interpret you will believe contains a kind meaning; what you fear you will fear as a mark of

his displeasure, and in no other view; what you suffer you will suffer as the instrument of his goodness. The changes in the world, and, much less, the dark and the light aspects of your affairs, will not, for a moment, give you any misapprehensions of your Maker. The longer you live, the more will you acknowledge the equity of his dispensations, and the more humbly will you rely upon his providence.

If, then, you would correct your false notions of God, you must be more intimate with him. Live a life of habitual devotion, and your breast will be the temple of Divinity. "He, that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." Without this spirit of piety, it seems to me, that all our discourses, all our descriptions of Jehovah, and, indeed, everything relating to religion, must appear to you like the conversation of foreigners, in a language which, however familiarized to your ear, you do not understand. Without the aid of a devotional spirit, God must be forever a stranger to you. Oh! my friends, let us beware, lest the light, which bursts upon the world to come, reveal him to us, not as a stranger only, but as an enemy.

SERMON XXI.

JOHN VII. 17.

IF ANY MAN WILL DO HIS WILL, HE SHALL KNOW OF THE DOCTRINE, WHETHER IT BE OF GOD, OR WHETHER I SPEAK OF MYSELF.

AMID the great variety of existing opinions on the subject of religion in general and of Christianity in particular, this text often becomes the refuge of the weary and distracted mind; and it is also often held out as an encouragement to the youthful inquirer who is beginning to seek with anxiety for the truth as it is in Jesus. The Christian quotes this text against the infidel, when he is not willing directly to impeach his motives. The theological polemic quotes it against his adversary, when he is himself compelled, by stress of argument, to retreat from his positions, and shelter himself in the goodness of his heart, rather than in the strength of his cause. The fanatic quotes it against the man whom he cannot make to feel as he does, and who, he is sure, therefore, will not think with him. And, lastly, the man of real candor quotes it, when, weary of the war of words, disgusted with the spirit of sectarianism and the obscurities of human systems, he seeks repose, for himself and his friends, in this merciful declaration, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

The words were addressed by our Savior to those incredulous Jews who had heard his public teachings in Jerusalem, at the feast of tabernacles. We learn from the Evangelist, in this chapter, that there was, at this time, much dissension among the Jews respecting Jesus. Some said he was a good man; others said nay, and maintained that he seduced the people. For, adds the evangelist, no man, not even the friends of Jesus, openly professed his attachment to him, through fear of the Jews. Then Jesus went up to the temple and taught, that is, in the most public manner. The Jews, who heard him, were astonished at his preaching, and said, Whence hath this man any knowledge of the sacred writings, having never received the usual education? He has had no instruction in the science of the law, to which our doctors are brought up; or, as we should say, he has never received a professional education. The language of our English version, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned," does not, in this place, give the meaning of the Jews. Their wonder was, that our Savior should assume the office of a public religious instructer, without having been brought up at the feet of some rabbi. Jesus replies to this objection: The doctrine, which I deliver, is not mine, but His who sent me. If any one will do the will of God, he will know whether this doctrine has God for its author, or whether I speak of myself, and merely on my own authority. He, who speaketh of himself, or on his own authority merely, consults his own glory; but he, who consults the honor of him who commissions him, is true; a teacher very far removed from any attempt at imposture.

Before we proceed to state and illustrate the doctrine of our text, we have two preliminary remarks to suggest.

In the first place, the text allows us to conclude that a man, without the knowledge of Christianity, or of any other revelation, may yet be disposed to do the will of God. It supposes that there may exist in the mind a predisposition to religious obedience, or, at least, a sincerity and ingenuousness of temper, which qualifies some minds better than others for instruction. The disposition, to which our Savior makes the promise, is that general disposition of religious obedience, which, certainly, is not entirely unknown under any dispensation; and which may accompany that knowledge of God, which we are commonly said to derive from the works of creation and the plain deductions of reason. The proffer of the gospel, therefore, presupposes a knowledge of some truths among mankind, and a certain moral character in individuals, either favorable or unfavorable to its reception. Christianity does not profess to give us our primary, much less our only, religious notions. Neither does it suppose every man to be utterly averse from all good, and inclined to all evil, and that continually, till he comes within its enlightening doctrine and sanctifying influences. It supposes some groundwork in human nature, on which the gospel is to build, some previous moral capacities in a man, as necessary to the operation of the gospel motives. It is intended, indeed, to regenerate the human heart; but it also supposes the heart to be already prepared to yield to its regenerating influence. In short, the language of the text implies that we must be inclined to do the will of God, before we can receive the doctrine of Jesus Christ as the truth of God. Of course, our disposition to do the will of God cannot depend exclusively on our faith in Christ.

Our second remark is, that the text gives to an honest

and serious mind the liberty of judging of the claims, and even of the doctrines, of Christ. That is, our Savior does not profess to bear down the judgments of men, as to the truth either of his pretensions or of his doctrines, by the mere force of his authority. He evidently supposes some previous knowledge of God's will, some original truths, either of reason or of revelation, with which the professed communication from God must not be inconsistent. The text, in fact, implies, that, in every case of revelation, we have some standard, more or less complete, by which we may judge whether the doctrine delivered, or the pretensions made, by any one who lays claim to divine authority, are to be admitted. Jesus himself submitted his pretensions to the scrutiny of his contemporaries, and, of course, to the scrutiny of all men of sober and candid minds. He authorizes the exercise of reason in the case of revelation; not, indeed, to determine whether there was a necessity for instruction by revelation, for of this God alone can be a competent judge; nor to say that the thing is altogether unnecessary and improbable, and, therefore, to refuse to listen to the teacher, or to examine his pretensions. This very reason requires us to listen, while it allows us to judge of the proofs of the revelation, and the conformity of its doctrines to what we before knew of God. It by no means allows us to reject any truths as coming from God, simply because they are new and unknown to us before, or because they are such as we did not discover or should not have expected; but still, these truths, however strange, or unexpected, or ungrateful, must be viewed in the best light we have; and the text supposes, that, if they are from God, they will certainly commend themselves to the acceptance of every mind that is disposed to do the will of

God. It is possible, indeed, to suppose a case, — which, however, is not likely to happen under the government of God, — in which an honest inquirer may, at one and the same time, find the external proof of the teacher's authority irresistible, and the doctrines taught irreconcilable to the dictates of his best reason. In such a case the mind must remain in suspense, either suspecting that it has been deceived in its examination of the proofs, or that it does not thoroughly understand the doctrines. And just in this state of indecision, nothing is more consolatory to the honest, or more alarming to the disingenuous, than the words of our text.

We proceed now to the doctrine of the text. To every man, whether he believes Christianity or not, it is highly important. It includes two propositions: —

That our religious conviction of the truth of Christianity very much depends on the moral state of our minds; —

That a correct knowledge of the doctrines of this religion is promoted by the practice of its laws.

To some minds there is nothing more offensive than to hear it maintained, that their indecision or their unbelief, on the question of revelation, results from the nature of their habits of life, or the prevailing state of their affections. Now, on the other hand, the believer in the gospel does not think it any reproach to his understanding, when it is said, that his love of God and goodness has biased him to the reception of Christianity. This is an awkward, though an unavoidable, state of things; and yet it results from the very nature of the Christian religion as a moral system.

If Christianity offered men any temporal emoluments or advantages, if it held out any lure to the passions of the believer, we should be more cautious in using this language

on the subject of faith; because the believer could never be secure against a retort in kind, which it would be difficult to parry. But, when we look at the doctrine of Jesus Christ, presenting itself in all its simplicity and purity, to counteract the influence of the darling objects of temporal ambition, and the darling passions of vain and selfish men; when we regard its threats and promises, all relating to the inner man and the future world; when we find it presenting itself to our examination, unsupported except by its historical proofs and its own internal excellency; we feel that Jesus has a right to say, Those, who heartily embrace my doctrine, such as it is in the New Testament, must do it from virtuous motives; and those, who reject it, are under the bias of some moral indisposition.

When we, in imagination, see the meek and holy Son of God in the presence of his captious and bigoted countrymen, "without form or comeliness," "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," unrecommended by a single circumstance flattering to the pride or passions of his hearers, and unsupported by anything but the consciousness that God was with him, and appealing to nothing but the proofs of divine power, which he exhibited, and the purity of his life and doctrine; when we find him able to promise nothing to his followers on earth, and threatening them with the afflicting consequences of their rejection of him who would save them from their sins; when we recall this picture of Jesus on earth, who can refuse him the right of saying to the Jews, and to all mankind, "Ye will not come to me that ye may have life." "This is your condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

Now, if he could say this, with justice, to men who had the evidence of their senses to assist their belief, we may be allowed to say it now, when the evidence of the truth of Christianity is even more of a moral kind than it was in the lifetime of our Savior and the apostles. Do you ask how this is? I answer, that the faith of the first witnesses of the gospel must have had less of a moral character, the more it had of the evidence of the senses to produce it, and the more it was assisted by the personal influence of our Savior's presence. I do not by this mean to say that the moral demerit of any particular case of unbelief may not now be less than in the case of the unbelieving Jews; but only that the moral motives for embracing Christianity have now become almost the only ones that can operate, either in drawing our attention to the subject of revelation, or in affecting our determinations. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

The doctrine of the text applies with similar force to all just religious belief, from whatever source derived.. We do not admit, indeed, that any religion worthy of the name can exist, at present, without Christianity; and, surely, there is nothing of value in any other religion, which is not found better in Christianity. Nay, what do we learn from the example of men in Christian countries, who renounce their Christianity? Do we not find, that, when their Christianity is abjured, all their religion goes with it? The religious principle, if not extinct, becomes ineffectual, and everything in morals and belief is let loose and powerless in their minds. The present age is full of examples, some of them, indeed, on a broad and national scale, which ought to teach us the full force of the disciple's exclamation, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

Still, however, the unbeliever has a right to demand of us to explain how it is, that virtue and vice have this operation on belief. He will say, "There is no such mutual influence of belief and practice as you imagine; for practice is dependent on the will, opinion is not; character is voluntary, belief is necessary; belief, therefore, must always follow the nature of evidence and the force of demonstration. It is an act of the understanding, which moral motives cannot or ought not to affect."

To all this reasoning, which seems so fair, we will not yet oppose the immense multitude of facts within every one's observation, where we are in the habit of charging men, every day, with the effect of their hopes or fears, their dispositions and wishes, on their opinions; but will content ourselves with this general remark, that, whatever may be the truths, facts, or opinions, which are of a nature to influence the temper and practice, it is not unnatural to suppose, nay, it unavoidably follows, that the previous temper, or character, or practice, has an influence on the view which we take of the evidence of such truths or facts. Now, that Christianity is a truth, fact, or opinion of this kind, no one can pretend to deny; and, as it regards the mere explanation of this well known phenomenon of the human mind, of the reciprocal influence of belief and practice, it is quite as difficult to explain how opinions should influence character as how character should influence opinions.

But let us attend to this subject more minutely. Here is a young man tempted to some unlawful indulgence. The question of the truth of religion, that is, of the Christian religion, occurs to his mind in these circumstances. He knows, perhaps, or he has heard of, the doubts of others, whose powers of mind he has reason to respect. In the

mean time, he is called to decide whether he shall, from considerations of religion, give up the offered pleasure. On the one hand, he is pressed by a strong temptation; he must decide, or the opportunity of sin is gone. He decides, then; what? not that religion is absolutely false, — no, this is not necessary for the occasion, — but that it is so doubtful as not to be a reason with him for giving up this indulgence, which may, perhaps, never again fall within his reach. Now it is not necessary to say how unfavorable must be the effect of this single determination on his mind, whenever he comes to reflect afterwards, in cooler moments, on the subject of religion. But let such deliberations and such judgments be often repeated, and must they not leave in the mind a settled persuasion against religion, and, of course, against the consideration of it? They have the same effect on the mind, which they would have, if made in more favorable circumstances; whereas, in truth, they are made in the most unfavorable, that is, under the pressure of a present temptation. As this process, which we have described, takes place, when the restraints of religion are most galling, and at the very time of determining on the act of sin, it is easy to see that this balancing of reasons, and this occasional rejection, will often be tacit, and not express. The conclusion, though not expressly drawn, is yet adopted; and, as it is practically adopted, and we act upon this hasty decision, it alienates the mind, as surely and as effectually, from religion, as if we had formally reasoned ourselves into a conviction of its uncertainty or falsehood.

It should be further remembered, that it is the tendency of some habits, especially those of sensuality and licentiousness, to weaken the powers of the understanding, while they thoroughly corrupt the heart. The mind, which is

under the dominion of lust, acquires a total inaptitude to religious considerations. And where this kind of depravity does not exist, yet is every species of immoral habit unfriendly to the production of religious faith. A man in such circumstances is always ready to magnify small difficulties, to seize at petty cavils, and to lay hold of arguments which fall in with the course of his vicious propensities. In short, the operation of moral character upon speculative belief is a process which, however difficult it may be, in particular cases, to detect, is yet, in some degree, understood by every man, and is frequently acknowledged by those who have undergone any considerable change of religious opinion.

If now we are called upon to show, on the other hand, how virtue produces belief in Christianity, or in Jesus Christ as the messenger of God, speaking with God's authority, it might be enough, perhaps, to answer, that it leaves the mind free from the weight of prejudice, and unaffected by the unfavorable biases which we have just now been describing. But it has also a more direct influence. For much of the evidence of the gospel is internal. It is addressed to the moral feelings of the human heart: and every degree of proficiency in virtue makes us not only think more, but more highly, of Christianity, whether we yet believe in it or not. The discourses of Christ and the writings of the apostles breathe such an unction of goodness that they leave an impression on the mind of a good man, which is more effectual, perhaps, in producing religious conviction than any historical evidence, while, at the same time, it disposes him to receive without cavil the historical testimony, and corroborates the external proofs. In fine, every man, placed within the reach of information,

and who will do the will of God, lays hold of that branch of the evidence of Christianity best suited to his habits of thinking, and comes, at last, to believe that the doctrine of Jesus Christ is the doctrine of God. It is, indeed, a process through which the understanding imperceptibly passes; and though many believe and yet sin, and many disbelieve from other causes besides immorality and irreligion, yet the tendency of virtue to faith, and of vice to infidelity, must be admitted as the general rule; and so common is it that we may be thought to have spent too much time in illustration of our Savior's plain declaration.

There remains another view of our subject peculiarly interesting to us, as Christians, who have taken the words of Christ and of his apostles as the source and standard of our religious belief. The declaration in the text, then, authorizes us to believe, in the second place, that he, who will do the will of God, shall not only know all that is essential in Christianity, but that he, who practises this religion most faithfully, will understand it best.

Now this could never be truly said, if Christianity were a system of curious and difficult truths; if it were that incomprehensible thing which it is sometimes made in the language of men. Indeed, this could not be true, if all, that is in it, necessary to salvation, were not either plain or practical. If the knowledge of Christianity consisted in the knowledge of those subtile distinctions which have exercised the understandings of theological disputants, or if it depended on the settlement of the meaning of certain difficult texts, the sense of which can be known and vindicated only by the learned, or if it required any peculiar comprehension of mind to receive correctly its essential and distinguishing dogmas, our Savior never could have said

that a mere disposition to do the will of God would qualify a man to understand his religion. But this our Savior has asserted. For it would be trifling, or impious, to suppose, that our Savior meant only, "If you will do the will of God, you shall know that my doctrine comes from God;" while, at the same time, he secretly knew that the same disposition, without some uncommon comprehension or acuteness of mind, would not enable them to understand his doctrine, and judge of its character and importance, so far as it concerned themselves. This would be, in fact, to say, "You may know that I speak the truth, while you shall not be able to understand me."

If, then, we attempt to analyze this process of mind, as we did the other, and inquire how it comes to pass, that a disposition to do the will of God enables us to understand the gospel, as well as to believe in its divine origin, we shall be compelled to come to this conclusion, that a good disposition can give us no aid in judging of the truth of doctrines except so far as they are practical; of course, we have every reason to conclude that everything essential in Christianity is a practical truth. A temper of obedience to God's will, however excellent in itself, will give us no aid on many of the topics of theological discussion. How can the best disposition in the world help us, for instance, to conceive of the distinction between person and substance in the trinity; between imputed and original righteousness, or sin; between natural and moral inability? The best disposition in the world gives us no light on the subject of personal identity and the resurrection of the same body, no clearer conception of the distinction between common and special grace, or justification by faith alone, and not by that faith which is alone, as polemics talk. It leaves us as

much in the dark as ever on many other topics yet disputed among Christians; and it may very well be doubted, whether the most holy life and the most frequent supplications for divine illumination would give the bewildered Christian much help in understanding these and many more distinctions which might be enumerated.

But would you know how the love and practice of virtue lead to the right understanding of the gospel, take up the New Testament, and open your mind to the devout, holy, and benevolent spirit which breathes in the discourses of our Lord and his apostles. The truths, which effectually and permanently influence practice, are few, but they are often repeated. Like everything great, they are as simple and plain as they are important. The instructions and precepts of our Lord appear to those, who are desirous of instruction, altogether excellent and worthy to be observed. The doctrines, which are "according to godliness," are best understood by a godly man.

For instance, there are some of the precepts of our Lord, which, in the eyes of the world, appear doubtful and unreasonable. The good man, who would know whether they are really excellent and worthy of God, makes the experiment of them in his own conduct. Thus he finds that it is true wisdom, to forgive rather than to resent, and that it is much more easy to be humble than to be vain; and thus he understands the Christian doctrine of forgiveness and humility. He finds, by experience, the folly of unreasonable anxiety, the vanity of earthly attachments and pursuits, and how much better it is, to trust in the Lord, than to lean to our own understandings, and thus comprehends the doctrines of providence and of faith. He is brought down by affliction, and understands the doctrine of the life

to come, and every day, which revives his self-examination and repentance, makes him sensible of the worth of the doctrine of pardon brought by Jesus Christ. As he reads the Scriptures with a pure and honest intention, not only do the grace and glory of our Savior's character open more and more upon his mind, but he also feels the force and discerns the divine origin of our Savior's teaching. The rays of Christian truth, like the light of heaven, fall most abundantly on the eye that is directed upwards. As his mind is free from that exclusive attachment to particular systems, by which many ingenuous intellects are cramped or reduced, and as he regards religious truth only in its relation to practice, it is enough for him, to find that a particular explication of a theological point is not of any moral value, to believe that it may safely be disregarded as no part of the revelation of God.

There is, then, this further account to be given of the superior knowledge of a good man in all the essential truths of Christianity, that he reads the Scriptures with impartiality, honestly desirous of ascertaining what the Lord God would have him to do. It is previously to be expected, that he, who is most desirous of obeying and of imitating God, will be most likely to ascertain those truths which really bear the true stamp of divinity. If we once admit, then, that Christianity is a religion for practice, and that a good man is not infallible in the interpretation of every part of Scripture, it follows, that, to answer the promise in the text, it must be, that those mistakes, into which it is possible for a good man to fall, relate to subjects which do not belong to the essence of Christianity.

Further, if we believe in the good providence of God, extending to all mind as well as to matter, or in the real,

though imperceptible, aid of his spirit, we cannot doubt that he, who ingenuously seeks and diligently obeys the truth, as far as he discovers it, will be ultimately led into every necessary article of faith. "The meek will he guide in judgment; and the meek will he teach his way." He, who is willing to learn, is commonly taught; and he, who is disposed to obey God, may depend upon it, that he does not break any of God's commandments by disbelieving a doctrine which he cannot find in the instructions of Christ and his apostles. On the other hand, let it not be forgotten, that obscurity and incapacity of mind are infallibly promoted by the prevalence of unworthy passions and the force of sinful habits. "As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge," says the Apostle, "God gave them up to an undiscerning and injudicious mind;" and, when speaking of the corruptions which should find their way into the Christian church, the same apostle says, "the man of sin" shall come "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness,—because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."

Once more; if we believe the words of our Savior in the text, it is fair, to conclude that every man, who will do the will of God, is much more sure of the truth, by his diligent study of the Scriptures in general, or even of the words of Christ, than he can be made by any of the declarations of a church professing itself infallible, or by any of the compends of doctrines framed "by art and man's device." Of course, then, it should never give a pious and humble mind a moment's uneasiness, that it cannot bring its faith to any one of the popular standards; for, if the truths, which we firmly believe, are fewer than are required by the impositions of men, yet, if our creed is the result of a fair

and rational study of the Scriptures, unbiased, as we can perceive, by any improper considerations, — the man, who is conscious, I say, of this state of mind, need be under no alarm for the salvation of his soul, as far as belief can affect his salvation. His great anxiety should be to act up to the light he has received, and faithfully to fulfil the extent of his duties; for such, God be thanked! is the intimate connexion of all doctrines and duties, that the man, who religiously fulfils one branch of knowledge or practice, will have gone very far to the observance of the whole.

I will conclude the subject with a simple recapitulation of those conclusions which our text has suggested to us.

We have concluded, then, that a man may be seriously disposed to do the will of God, before he has had knowledge of the Christian revelation; and, of course, there are elements in human nature, on which Christianity may be built. We have seen, also, that the truth of his claims and the nature of his doctrines are submitted by our Savior himself to the judgment of unperverted reason.

We have seen how virtue produces belief, and vice unbelief, in the authority of Christ, or in the Christian revelation; and we know that he, who best practises Christianity, will best understand it; and that all the truth, which is essential, in Christianity, is, that which a mind, disposed to do the will of God, cannot fail to receive by the study of the Scriptures. "God giveth to a man, that is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge;" and may God grant, that, "the eyes of our understanding being enlightened," we may understand what is the excellency of the knowledge of the glory of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

SERMON XXII.

ECCLESIASTES I. 14.

I HAVE SEEN ALL THE WORKS THAT ARE DONE UNDER THE SUN; AND, BEHOLD, ALL IS VANITY AND VEXATION OF SPIRIT.

THERE are some maxims of practical morality, which are so common and so familiar to every man's experience that it seems idle to tell what every one knows, and superfluous to prove what it is impossible to doubt. But the effect of moral maxims is produced rather by placing them in new and striking aspects. Among those truths which all men believe, but which few practically feel, may be mentioned the utter uncertainty of human life and all its expectations and enjoyments. The experiments, which prove this fact, have been making ever since the world was made; and not an individual has entered on the stage of life and passed through the common career of worldly probation, who has not been, sooner or later, willing to confess, with Solomon, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

There is a spirit of dissatisfaction pervading this whole book of Ecclesiastes, from which our text is taken, which renders the perusal of it painful and melancholy. The royal author, in the course of his luxurious life, had drained every source of pleasure, till satiety had succeeded enjoyment. He had decked himself in every flower that grew by the walks of life, and worn them, till their colors had

faded, and their perfume had been exhaled. He had intoxicated himself with every variety of sensual gratification, till, awaking, at last, from his dream of delight, he found himself sick at heart, and his spirits sunk within him to a stagnant level of discontent.

Solomon, indeed, was now suffering the misery of disappointment. He had been disappointed, not of obtaining the means of enjoyment in any particular instance, but he was blasted with excess of pleasure. He had collected around him all the means and appendages of enjoyment, but the substance had escaped him. The ingenuity and the patience of his servants had been exhausted in contrivances of new pleasures for the monarch. He had tried mirth, and it was mad; wine, and it was folly. "I made me," says he, "great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits; I made me pools of water; I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle, above all that were in Jerusalem before me; I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces; I gat me men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.— Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do, and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."

And this man, who had but to wish, and the means of enjoyment were collected around him, who but stretched out his hand, and pleasures dropped into it,—this great monarch found, after all, that, in point of actual happiness,

the difference was but trifling between him who obtained all, and him who obtained nothing, of what he desired on earth.

It may not be unprofitable, to employ a short portion of our time in contemplating the disappointments and uncertainties of our life on earth, that we may learn something more of the great art of contentment, and limit our expectations on this side the grave.

We will consider, first, the disappointment of early hopes and expectations; and, secondly, the uncertainty of life and its actual enjoyments.

First; the disappointment of early expectations.

When the curtain of life is first drawn up, a thousand incompatible objects of pleasure strike the eye of the inexperienced spectator, and he forms, at once, a thousand inconsistent wishes and impatient desires. He takes all the show of happiness, also, for reality; and, as objects of pleasure first present themselves to him, he discovers nothing but their beautiful colors; and, till he has grasped them, he does not suspect that they have a sting.

There are some men who seem born into a world made on purpose to receive them. As they grow up into life, all about them is softness and security. If they fall, they fall upon down; when they stand, they lean upon the arms of affection; they seem to have nothing to do but "to gather the rosebuds before they wither," for all the delights of life are provided to their hands. Send one of these favorites of fortune out into the world to expatiate in the fulness of pleasure. Let him not know miscarriages. Let to-morrow be with him as this day, and even more abundant. Yet all the expectations of this favorite child of luxury are utterly defeated. And how is this? He finds that he has

lived too fast. In a few years he has exhausted the pleasures which might have been economically diffused through threescore years and ten; and he retires, sick of that entertainment of life, which others are just beginning to taste, and cries out, "All is vanity, and vexation of spirit."

If such is the fate of those who seem born to set trouble at defiance, what shall we say of the vast number who struggle to reach those gifts of Providence, from which, by their situation in life, they are placed at a distance? We find some men laboring for comfortable establishments in life, and we see not why their chance of success is not originally as good as that of other competitors for this world's goods. But unforeseen accidents cross their plans. Sometimes their imprudence, sometimes their neglect, sometimes their very honesty defeats them; and, from some strange defect, they toil without profit, and every new attempt to rise only serves to sink them lower.

The competitors for honor are yet more exposed to disappointment; and even the fond hope of useful distinction and mental influence is extremely delusive and uncertain. Opportunities of improvement, which we had anticipated, never present themselves; and the long-expected leisure for study retreats before us, like the horizon. Sometimes our early labors are lost, because misdirected. Sometimes our intellectual treasures, by a total revolution in public sentiment, are rendered useless. Perhaps the faculties of the mind are prematurely worn out by excessive exertion, the mind itself crushed by its own acquisitions, and left, without memory and without judgment, a prey to all the miseries of a wandering imagination. Perhaps — but why should I multiply conjectures to swell the list of disappoint-

ments? Why should I search for the chances of failure, when, even if you should succeed in all your worldly projects and in every single object of your wishes, you will find, at last, that happiness is not here?

But it is not the expectations of the young only, that are so fallacious. We find the infirmities of old age assailing men, while they are projecting plans for many distant years. After having given up the bustle of active life, and while expecting to enjoy the quiet pleasures of an old age spent in the society of children and friends, the senses begin to fail us, we can hardly discern the countenances that once gave us pleasure, our dull hearing refuses to distinguish the voices that we love, and we grow tiresome to those who are willing to amuse us. Sometimes the very children, on whom we relied for the comfort of our declining years, prove our severest afflictions. They are unfortunate, and the aged parent is involved in their disasters; they are vicious, and he is left to weep over them. Or, if such great evils as these are, by God's good providence, averted, yet the recollection of the daily diminishing sum of our pleasures, and the perpetually intruding thought of living beyond the wishes of those around us, of filling places which others are waiting to occupy, are sufficient to teach us that the season of hope ought to be over with us, and that nothing remains but to suffer, since we can no longer act, — for "by faith and patience" we may yet hope to "inherit the promises."

In contemplating these disappointments, we can hardly refrain from complaint and despondency. Two considerations have suggested themselves to my mind, which serve to account for this state of things, and to condemn our repinings.

The first is, that the inconsistency of our pursuits and

expectations is the chief cause of our disappointment. It is of the utmost consequence, that we should attain to just notions of the human mind, and not vex ourselves with fruitless wishes, and give way to groundless and unreasonable discontent upon the non-attainment of incompatible pleasures. The child of fortune, if he chooses to exhaust all his sources of pleasure at once, has no reason to complain that he does not afterwards enjoy the benefit of novelty or variety. He must not suppose that he can partake, at the same time, of the ease of the man who has everything provided for him without labor, and the sweet satisfaction that follows the success of toil, and the conquest of difficulties. And, if he chooses to waste, in a few years, the pleasures which might be economically distributed through a long life, he must not complain that he, at length, suffers the misery of having nothing to enjoy.

But you complain that you are disappointed in the attainment of those very things which belong to your course of life. But what is the reason? You have attempted to unite incompatible advantages. You have wished to attain extent and depth of acquirements, professional distinction and general literature, taste amid the drudgery of learned labor, public consequence and the private acquisition of rare and curious knowledge. You have no right to complain that you cannot join together inconsistent acquisitions.

The man of stern virtue suffers. He is persecuted, he is banished, he is forgotten; or he is unknown, he is reduced to want, or he is always struggling with poverty. All this he might have saved by the sacrifice of his honor, his integrity, his faith, or his religion. But why should he

murmur, while he retains that which he acknowledges to be better than all other advantages?

The old man must not complain of disappointment, because he cannot enjoy, in age, the pleasures of youth. It is impossible to have, at the same time, the satisfaction of looking back upon a life that is past, and the anticipation of many years to come. But your wealth, you say, does not reward you now, when you most expected to enjoy it. Be content with the satisfaction you had in acquiring it. Your children, on whom you have bestowed so much affection and indulgence, pierce your heart through with many sorrows. But, if you would not submit to the pain of correcting them, to the labor of giving them principles of virtue and religion, and if, to spare them and yourself from trouble, you left them to themselves, be not surprised that you must now suffer from this neglect. But you see nothing in the world to come, which gives you consolation. Ah! this is the natural consequence of having put off the thoughts of it till these last moments. Be not surprised that you cannot reconcile these incompatibilities. You have had what you sought supremely on earth; do not think it strange, that you have no treasures in heaven.

Beside the want of moderation and consistency in our expectations, another cause of the disappointment of early hopes is to be ascribed to the folly of our choice, and the unsatisfactory nature of the objects of human pursuit in themselves. If we will not submit to be instructed by the experience of ages, we must make the experiment for ourselves, and have no right to complain of disappointment. It is unquestionably certain, that no real and permanent satisfaction is to be found, except in the favor of God, and the hope of another life, founded in virtue, integrity, and

piety. But you have chosen wealth, rather than virtue. If, after enjoying it, you are satisfied of its incompetency to your happiness, though you may have suffered thereby a great disappointment, it is an invaluable lesson, and the discovery is an ample recompense. You have tried sensual pleasures. They have wounded you deeply; but you have no right to complain, no, not even if God should not afford you time to profit from your dear-bought experience. You have enjoyed all the honors which men could bestow upon you, and now you are disgusted, and sick of your elevation. Is this the fault of your Creator? You have lived only for yourself, in a selfish, narrow sphere. Are you to complain that you have no friends, and that you are destitute of that peace and harmony of mind, which belong to the active, the pious, and the generous? "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof." You would not listen to the word of God, and the lessons of experience; if you have found out your mistake, make haste to retrieve it; and, if it be not too late, try the pleasures of religion and active virtue, and you will not be disappointed.

We proposed, in the second place, to consider those real blessings which we actually possess, and the uncertainty of life itself.

There are few men who do not possess some real advantage peculiar to themselves, in respect to which they would be losers in changing conditions with others. Some are in possession of firm health, others of a cheerful disposition. Some are happy in the abundance of their friends, others in being free from enemies. Every man has some peculiarity of good-fortune, as we call it, of which he is willing to be proud, and others to be envious. It seems

superfluous, to illustrate the assertion, that the best of these possessions are precarious, and I have nothing to do but to appeal to the common experience of all.

There have been those whom you have loved, in the full enjoyment of health, that real blessing; whose eyes were beaming with lustre, and whose muscles were full of strength. You have left them a few short years. On your return, you have hardly known their emaciated features, you could not recognize their tottering steps and fee ble voices. "When God with rebukes doth chasten man, he maketh his beauty to consume away like a moth."

You have seen those to whom misfortune might look up as to objects whom she could not reach, and even envy had acquiesced in their greatness and security. In a moment you have seen them brought down to the common crowd of the dependent and the miserable. You have seen men in the full enjoyment of reputation, carried along with the gale of popular favor in the sight of admiring spectators. In an instant it dies away; the full-blown honors sink, and they are heard of no more. The distinction founded on genius and learning seems, at first, to promise greater security. The changes and shocks of matter cannot, you think, reach the mind. Oh! would it were so. Yet we have all seen the memory lose its power, and the senses, that minister to it, decay, and the fancy quenched in the sorrows of age. A sudden attack of disease, in the very strength and vigor of our faculties, deranges all the fine structure of the mind, and fatuity occupies the seat where genius was enthroned.

You have seen the instability of friendship, and the loss of the dearest social pleasures. It is the condition on which we are allowed to make friends, that we should be willing

to part with them. Sometimes we lose their support before they leave us. The arm, on which we have long leaned, suddenly withers, and we are obliged to become supporters in our turn. Sometimes the love of many years is lost by a misunderstanding which our ingenuity finds it impossible to explain, or our meekness to reconcile. And who of you has not found, that, when you have had the happiness to travel on towards the close of life with the friend of your youth, or the children of your hopes, the grave parts you at last, and you have felt that affliction the hardest to support, which you ought to have been, all your life, preparing to bear? After all this, need I prove to you the uncertainty of life? I ask you to think only how many you have followed to the grave. Consider how large a portion of that intelligence, which is daily poured in upon us to gratify the natural curiosity of the mind, consists of the narrations of death; and the death, too, not of those who have reached the common term of human life, not of those who have died gently and peaceably in their beds, not of those who have sunk to the grave with unperceived decay, but deaths, sudden, violent, unexpected, every one of which invites us to look at ourselves and ask, "Why was that man taken, while I am left? O God, have mercy on the generations of men, for they are passing away."

But is there, then, nothing permanent on earth? My friends, I know of nothing in the universe permanent but God. God is from everlasting to everlasting, and no man is secure but he who loves God, and is loved by him. Can you, for a moment, think that this precariousness is too great, when you see how confidently and immoderately attached so many yet are to these transitory possessions

and to a delusion, yet existing and increasing, which all these admonitions cannot cure? Can you think this uncertainty too great, when you see how proud men are of their short-lived acquisitions, how vain of their precarious accomplishments, how envious of another's flourishing wealth, how discontented with their lot, how unprepared for changes and reverses, how much afraid to die? Is it for us, to complain of the condition of our existence, when it has yet taught us so little confidence in God, the only rock of trust; when we have yet to learn that there is but one possession which is eternal, and that is virtue; one source of happiness, which disappointment and death cannot reach, and that is the favor of God?

Do you say that the picture, which we have given, of human life, so full of disappointment and uncertainty, is too discouraging? True, my friends, it may be the dark side, but it is not, therefore, the less true, and it may be of great use occasionally to contemplate it.

Finally; if it be asked, Why is all this uncertainty permitted under the government of a benevolent and unchangeable Being? the only answer is, that the present state can only be considered as a state of probation. The most gay and thoughtless creature, when he looks out upon the state of mankind, cannot avoid the conclusion, that the world is not, upon the whole, a place of happiness. There is too much misery everywhere in view, and more which is out of the sight of him who will not look for it, to allow us the belief, that God intended man for happiness here, or that he has placed us in a state of reward. Nay, every man's own heart answers the question for himself, and, at the same time, suggests the suspicion, that the answer is not very different throughout the world. And besides this answer

of every man's own experience, when he finds, from the observation of past ages, how much of pain, sorrow, disease, and disappointment has always attended mankind, and seems inseparable from their nature, the conclusion is as strong, that this world was not intended to be, as that it is not, a place of absolute happiness; for, if this was the intention, it has been universally defeated.

On the other hand, it is not a place of misery. The evil, that exists, does not appear to be the object of contrivance. On the contrary, everything, we see, tends to counteract and correct the misery which actually exists. If this were really a place of punishment for a fallen race, there is an extraordinary want of contrivance in the tendencies to pain, and in the distribution of suffering. If God were really punishing us here, would he have given us so many hopes, anticipations, and actual delights, as well as alleviations? If he had intended to make us miserable, could he have made this life a blessing in the opinion of so many, — which opinion is happiness, — a blessing which it is so very hard to relinquish? Nor could he have endowed creatures, whom he was punishing, with that wonderful part of their constitution, the power of habit, which infallibly diminishes evils by their continuance.

It is, if possible, still more clear, that this world is not a state of retribution. In the language of Solomon, "All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked;" and, in the distribution of good and evil, there is no proportion exactly observed between ill desert and punishment, good desert and reward. So different is it from a state of equitable retribution, that one of the principal sources of the strong desire, the fond hope, the longing after another state, arises from the persuasion,

that some kind of retribution is just commencing in some cases, but left very imperfect in all, so that some other state must be admitted for the accomplishment of God's equitable intentions; otherwise all, that we have discovered, is not merely imperfect, but superfluous, unsatisfactory, and purely embarrassing.

There remains, therefore, but one answer to our question, which is, that ours is a state of probation. By this we mean that it is a state of trial and discipline, preparatory to something further; a state in which moral agents are to be formed to active and passive virtue, and in which moral qualities are to be produced, exercised, and matured, with a view to some future condition. This account of human life is the only one which can be reconciled with the appearances of the world; the only one which either answers or silences the captious and curious inquiries, which are perpetually recurring to the mind of man, with relation to the government and goodness of God. For, when it is once understood, that the present is only a great theatre of preparation or of trial, it is folly to ask, Why was there not less uncertainty and disappointment? because it is just as easy and rational to ask, Why was there not more? If you assert that less would have been sufficient to answer every purpose of probation and moral discipline, I may ask, How much less? And why may not beings, placed in a condition less probationary than ours, inquire, with equal reason, Why were we not created more provident, more secure, more perfect, and more exalted?

My Christian friends, after this view of human life, can you think this your abiding-place? Have you found here enough to satisfy the desires of souls immortal like your own? No, I cannot consent to place you with the beasts

that perish. I cannot endure that you should think the miseries and disappointments, the doubts and vicissitudes, or even the enjoyments, of this life, are all that belongs to the existence of which God has put you in possession. Go to the gospel of his Son. Man there appears a more glorious creature, the child of an everlasting Father in Heaven, who gave his Son to die that we might live forever. Make that your guide through these disappointments and uncertainties, and all is clear and full of encouragement. Use this world without abusing it. Weep as though you wept not. Rejoice as though you rejoiced not. And, though "the fashion of this world passeth away," you may have "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

OCCASIONAL DISCOURSES.

DISCOURSE.

[Delivered December 18, 1808, on the Lord's day after the public funeral of the Hon. James Sullivan, Governor of Massachusetts.]

ROMANS XIV. 7.

FOR NONE OF US LIVETH TO HIMSELF, AND NO MAN DIETH TO HIMSELF.

WHENEVER the providence of God, in what is called the course of nature, removes from the society of mortals one whom we have long known, the chasm, which is thus left, in the compass of our accustomed business, pleasures, or acquaintance, suggests to every mind, near enough to observe it, some of its most serious contemplations. We know that no creature, from the seraph, that stands forever in the light of God's countenance, down to the insect, that glitters only for an hour, was made without purpose, or has lived without effect. We know, that, throughout creation, there is always some end, beyond the mere enjoyment of animal life, which every living creature is destined to accomplish; and we soon find, with relation to ourselves, that God has so wisely established the conditions of human happiness that the highest felicity of every individual can be attained only by living for others, and losing sight of his own personal gratification in the general service. In

proportion to the space, which any man fills, in the eye of the public, is the circle of his obligations carried out; the more ample his gifts, the more extensive should be his communications of good; the more busy his life, the more blameless should be his engagements; the longer his period of activity, the more various and remote should be his influence; and the loftier his elevation in society, the wider grows the horizon which his views of usefulness should embrace. The loss of a single mind out of the living ranks of rational creatures may affect the circumstances of innumerable beings. The extinction of one poor life may reduce, far beyond our estimate, the intellectual light of the world; and, if any man, however low and narrow his compass of action, could even faintly discern the most remote and feeble influences of his conduct in life, as they are propagated through the whole range of mortal existence, he would sink, with inexpressible humiliation, at the feet of God's mercy, and cry, "Overrule, O God, the undiscerned influence of my ill-desert and inactivity; and, if it be but for an hour, let me not have lived in vain!"

If such, then, upon the quenching of the faintest light of a human understanding, would be the meditations of a serious mind, which had considered the mutual connexion and influences of God's works, — when a man leaves the world, whose name has been long mentioned with interest, whose employments have been numerous, whose labors have been indefatigable, whose influence has been felt at the remotest border of our community, and whose station was, at last, the most elevated they had to bestow, — when such a place is left empty, every serious mind asks, with profound concern, Has he lived for himself only, or for others?

In the decease of the chief magistrate of this commonwealth, God, my friends, has blotted out a life of no ordinary rank. That life, which has been so long quivering on the point of extinction,* has, at last, lost its hold forever. The eye, that saw him, sees him no more; the voices, which blessed him, are henceforth silent; the prayers, which were made for him, ascend no more forever. His days are past; his purposes are broken off; his breath has gone forth; in that very hour his thoughts perish; and his spirit returns to thee, O God, with whom alone it remains to estimate, with unerring truth, the value of that mind, which thine inspiration enkindled, and that activity which thine energy sustained.

I need not ask for your indulgence, my hearers, nor that of the mourning family, if, from the words chosen for the text of my discourse, I devote the first portion to illustrate the great Christian obligation of neither living nor dying to ourselves. The memory of our late chief magistrate authorizes this topic; and, still further, the selfish and luxurious security of our country, the consequence of past prosperity, ought to awaken our solicitude, as the gathering trials of our times may, ere long, call upon us for active, liberal, conscientious, and magnanimous exertions. It is time, my friends, to look beyond ourselves, and feel the weight of our social obligations.

"No man liveth to himself." The Apostle's meaning

* His Excellency James Sullivan died on the morning of the 10th of December, 1808, aged 64, after a sickness of several months. For many weeks before he died, he was reduced to such extreme weakness that the public expected, every hour, to hear his decease announced. He was buried with public military honors, December 16th.

in this clause cannot be mistaken. No man, in any period of his life, has a right to consult his own private interests, either solely or supremely. The reason is assigned in the following verse: "For, whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's;" that is, God is the spontaneous bestower of man's time, talents, opportunities, and means; therefore man remains, at his first, and best, and last estate, the property of God alone, whose grand purpose he ought always to accomplish within his sphere of knowledge and of action. This grand purpose is the glory of God in the multiplying happiness of creation; an object which nothing so effectually counteracts as the gross self-interest and inactivity of rational man. Nay, more; God himself, if I may be allowed to say it, God, the all-embracing and controlling Power, lives not, and cannot live, for himself alone; but his unremitted activity is nothing but the unremitted agency of almighty power, prompted by benevolence, and directed by wisdom and truth.

Oh, that I could write upon your hearts, with the pen of a diamond, this supreme law of human nature! Study the system, which you see all around you, of material, animal, and rational existence, in its minutest, or in its grandest portions. Nothing, you see, is insulated; nothing existing for itself alone. Every part of creation bears perpetually on some other part, and they must subsist together. Indeed, the whole universe, as far as we have penetrated it, seems to be a mighty and complex system of mutual subserviency. Do you suppose, that bright sun has been shining, now six thousand years, to accommodate us only? No; it has warmed into life and joy innumerable millions,

of which we know nothing; and it moves, also, to diffuse a wider influence, and to hold together the unknown globes, and systems of globes, which are balanced around it. Descend as low as you can pierce, through the basest transformations of matter, living and lifeless, and you find everything has its use, and accomplishes its purpose. The very refuse, which man casts out and loathes, returns in all the beauty of vegetation, and brings him sustenance and gladness. The barren waste of ocean itself is the great medium of benevolent communication; its recesses teem with life, and its waters purify themselves by perpetual motion. Even the eternal ices of the poles are continually melting to supply the waste of fluid, and accommodate the wants of other regions. Beneficent activity is the primary law of creation; and inactive uselessness the eternal crime of human nature.

Again. "No man liveth to himself," because it is utterly irreconcilable with the spirit of Christianity; for it is the gospel, and the gospel alone, which makes it an indispensable law to every Christian, to be willing to sacrifice his highest terrestrial good, when God demands it for the benefit of others. For, as Jesus is true, a man, who makes this sacrifice, cannot ultimately lose so much as a hair of his head. If you doubt this, look at the life of "the Author and Finisher of our faith," which is, at once, the law and the example of his religion. It is the history of the most patient, wonderful, immeasurable sacrifices which any being could make for the good of the worthless and ungrateful. If you except that prayer, which was extorted by excessive anguish, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," the idea of self seems not, for a moment, to have held possession of his thoughts. It appears

to have been as foreign to them as the idea of guilt. He lived in the hopes and fears, the pleasures and pains of others; swallowed up in the future good of the race of men. It was for you, Christians, he ate, and drank, and rested, and slept, and prayed, and retired, and wept, and suffered, and died. Not a breath escaped him, which did not bear on it a wish of good-will for the world that he came to save. This is the great law of Christianity, and Jesus fulfilled it. He is the first and worthiest example of the spirit and recompense of the gospel. For were all his sacrifices to no purpose? Was his the philanthropy of a fanatic, or a cosmopolite, rewarded only by its own enthusiasm? No, Christians; we believe that the grave did not, and could not, imprison such a spirit. The tomb could not forever shut up a soul which had never been shut up within its own little sphere. It soon burst the bands, and dispersed the terrors of death. God could not suffer such a life to be lost. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that, at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, — and every tongue confess him Lord, to the glory of God, the Father;" for all live unto him. Such, my friends, was the first and destined reward of benevolence under the Christian dispensation; and, as Christ has risen, and as God is faithful, this soil, now full of mouldering remains, shall not hold forever insensible one pure, active, benevolent spirit, as long as the world shall endure.

Again. "No man liveth to himself," because no such man can be happy. It is an eternal and immutable law of God, that the direct pursuit of our own interest

should infallibly defeat itself. Then only do we enjoy the full measure of satisfaction, of which our natures are here susceptible, when self is forgotten, and our faculties are all actively engaged in the generous pursuit of some worthy and benevolent object. Where, my hearers, do you find most of the wretchedness of the world? Confess to me, it is not among the poor, the busy, the laborious; but among those who, left without anything to stimulate their exertions, have sunk into the selfish and sensual enjoyment of themselves. Where do you find most of the irritation, dissatisfaction, fretfulness, and painful anxiety in the world? Is it not among those whose wants are all supplied, except those indefinite desires which fix on nothing? Is it not among those whose time is perpetually thrown back upon their hands; men who have not the resolution, nor the inclination, to employ themselves; men whose lives are frittered away in expedients to kill time, without a wish to gratify, or a pursuit to engage them, which does not bring with it doubt, or remorse? The prospect of the hours, which are to come, oppresses them with anticipated evils; and the ghosts of the days, which have departed unimproved, rise to haunt their unoccupied fancies. Pursuit, and not attainment, is the law of human happiness. God has irrevocably determined that man to be unhappy, who sits down only to enjoy; and still further has he provided that we shall find our highest satisfactions, only when we most completely forget ourselves in the pursuit. The man, who has been living only for himself, wonders that he is not happy; while the blissful and beneficent God looks down and compassionates the short-sighted selfishness of mortals.

If such, then, is the great law of nature and of Chris-

tianity, that "no man liveth to himself," I call on you, whom God has distinguished with talents, whom he has prospered with good-fortune, whom he has crowned with honors, whom he has elevated to stations of activity and trust, — I call on you for unrelaxed and generous exertions. The more extended is your influence, the more intimately do you depend upon others, and the more solemn are your obligations. The more various or exalted are your enjoyments, the more are your wants multiplied, and the demands of society increase in return. Have ye ever thought, ye rich and great, have ye ever thought how brief is the whole life of man, and how much shorter is the period of his activity? Have you ever subtracted the days of helpless infancy; the years of childhood, when you lived on the care of others; the period of youth, in which you did little for others, or yourselves; one third of life always sunk in sleep; as much more consumed in the indulgences of appetite; and an indefinite length lost in absolute inaction; and do you know what is left? A very few months, or years, perhaps, in which you have lived for the highest purpose of your being. And how long do you think the period of vigor and exertion will last? Have you calculated the future waste of sickness, the palsying influence of pain? Have you thought of the inroads of old age; the days, when you will live only to burden, and not to benefit society? O you, who are now in the vigor of health and usefulness, consider, I beseech you, that, of threescore years and ten, you may not have ten, perhaps you may not have one more, to give to society and to God. And will this discharge your incalculable obligations? One year, to gain a title to the blessing of future generations, and the glory of eternity! If this is the treasury of

human merits, then, indeed, pride was not made for man!

"No man dieth to himself." This is a proposition which most men hear with more surprise and reluctance than the former. They have accustomed themselves to look forward to death, only as the termination of life. They regard it simply as an event which dissolves their connexion with the world; and which, as it closes forever the common inlets of suffering and enjoyment, effaces, at the same moment, their obligations and their powers. They flatter themselves that they have nothing to do, in that last and dreaded hour, but to compose their limbs for the moment of dissolution, and, with quiet insensibility, submit to be extinguished. But, I again repeat, not only is it "appointed unto men once to die," but, as the Apostle says, "no man dieth to himself."

Because, in the first place, of all the changes, to which our nature is subjected by the ordinance of God, this is that which is least within our power. "There is no man that hath power over the spirit, to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death." We have neither influence to retard, nor right to accelerate, this consummation. It is an event which the most sordid creature finds it impossible to convert to his purposes of self-interest. Then, if ever, the commission, which God has granted us, of life, is thrown up into his omnipotent hand. Then, if ever, we are not our own; but God remains the only and uncontrolled sovereign of the human soul, and it is for him alone to say that it shall live again. Everything is annihilated, but the consciousness that we are God's, with whom rests the destination of the living principle. For, when the frame of clay is fall-

ing, and our last connexions with the external world are, in a moment, to be rent asunder, with whom is man left, but with his God ?

Again. "No man dieth to himself," because most of the attachments, satisfactions, obligations, habits, hopes, and fears, which have hitherto constituted that complex object we call ourself, are dissevered by this last and greatest transition ; and, if we should continue to exist, we can hardly be said to live for the same self to which we have hitherto been attached. The act of expiring seems to leave the soul nothing of all which before engrossed it, but its moral bias, and its God. Our habitual anxieties for health and support; our concern for those who remain last and nearest to us, our favorite pursuits and daily duties, our apprehensions and expectations from the world, and all the petty passions and prejudices which have so long interested and agitated the mortal dwelling in flesh, are on the point of vanishing, like the spectres and visions of a midnight dream, and man wakes, a new creature, in the morning of an unknown region, and an eternal day. As that last crisis approaches, the care of the surrounding attendants diminishes ; the anxious expression of the observers grows less distinct; the half-audible lamentations of our friends die away upon the ear, to return no more : the pageantry of the sick chamber evanishes, with all the show and circumstance of life ; and God, God alone remains the all-engrossing object of the soul's new perception. "No man dieth to himself," for death leaves him not a moment to himself; but he is ushered into the nearer presence of his God, around whose throne the din of this nether world can no longer be distinguished, and the former idea of self-interest is lost in a throng of more intellectual

conceptions. Surely, in this last hour, on which so much is suspended, self is the most empty of words, and God the most momentous. For this consummation the longest life is but a previous ceremony; let the soul find herself then communing only with the omnipresent Spirit.

Again. "No man dieth to himself," because, as soon as the interest of the inhabitants of this world is terminated by our death, the interest of a new world of spiritual beings is awakened. For we are hastening to add to the life and joy of heaven, or to enhance and propagate the miseries of hell. The world, in which we have been living, was not more interested in our natural birth than is the future world in our transition by death. We are encouraged to believe that the spirits, which minister to the heirs of salvation, wait to see us die in peace; and we may indulge the hope, that joy is heard in heaven on the reception of a pure spirit to the region of everlasting life. "No man," then, "dieth to himself;" for the consequences of his dissolution reach even to the throne of God, and swell the triumphs of the saints, or the terrors of the realms of darkness.

Lastly. "No man dieth to himself," because no event, in the lives of most men, has a more extensive influence upon others. There is in almost every one an inexpressible curiosity to see how another dies. Let us all remember that we can give but one example of it; and a fault, committed in the hour of our departure, is not to be retrieved.

When we press around a dying creature, watching the last changes of his countenance, and the last accents of his voice, vainly hoping to gain some insight into that dark event, and curious to learn something of what it is to die, let us seriously consider that "no man dieth to himself."

Far be it from me, to intimate that the manner of our death is a test of the character, or an atonement for the faults of our lives; but every good man would wish to have it said of him, "Nothing in life became him like the leaving it." For the tongue will tell its last story without equivocation. The features will often retain the final and unalterable impress of the spirit, as it rushes forth to meet its God. It is possible, then, by God's blessing, to leave with the world the features of our religion. Remember that every good man, dying in his bed, is clothed with something of the authority of God. The language of the dying has something of the solemnity of a voice from the region of spirits. In the presence of the expiring, too, every heart is tender, every ear is listening, every breast is anxious, every noise is still; and men wait to receive from the lips of the departing a last message of God, which may not be repeated. Our words, my friends, may then reach some heart which never before was touched. It may believe us, when we tell it how the objects of mortal pursuit appear to us, as they are retiring in the twilight of life, when the light dawns from beyond the grave. After many of the events of our history are lost in forgetfulness, some may remember how we died; and it must be to a Christian an inexpressible consolation, to hope that his last breath shall not be lost; that even the composure of his countenance shall not be seen in vain; that he shall teach his family and friends a more interesting lesson by his death than by any single action of his life; in a word, that, in his death, Jesus will have gained more than one conquest, and death have lost a triumph. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

You have, no doubt, observed, my hearers, in the topic which I have chosen, and the manner in which I have treated it, occasional recollections of our departed chief magistrate. He lives now only in our remembrance; and I can hold up to you the history only, and not the man. The tomb has closed upon his excellences and his imperfections. He has gone to appear before God, and his character only accompanies him. I stand not here to praise the dead, or flatter the living. I only pay the debt of private friendship and public expectation, in what I shall now say of the life and character of Governor Sullivan.

God, who disposes the lot of the undistinguished, as well as of the eminent, marked him out in an obscure region,* to accomplish, by his indefatigable employments, purposes important in a young community. The history of his life would be the history of a mind which no exertion wearied, and no obstacle permanently checked. We should see in him a man rising above all the impediments of fortune, and the default of a regular education, to fill successively the most busy and responsible trusts, where the greatest exertions of mind were demanded. We should discern his faculties expanding themselves, as his sphere in life enlarged, and growing more versatile, as his opportunities multiplied; leaving, in every part of his course, traces of a powerful and original mind. Had it not been for one of

* Governor Sullivan was born at Berwick, in the District of Maine, on the 22d of April, 1744. His father, a man of liberal education, came from Ireland to this country and settled at Berwick about the year 1723. He took the sole charge of the education of his son James, and lived to witness his rapid elevation. He died at the age of 105 years.

those unforeseen misfortunes on which the after-series of the most important lives sometimes depends, Governor Sullivan, instead of leaving a professional reputation, would have lived, perhaps, to be remembered only by his courage, and an iron constitution. But the fracture of a limb, in his early years, saved him from the hardships of a military life, to which he was destined, and gave him to his country for a singular example of the eternal superiority of mind over matter.

This is not the place to detail to you minutely the progress of his elevation, from the time, when he first drew the observation of his country. Every step is marked with labor and with vigor, with increasing confidence in the public, and with unabated zeal and activity in the man. There is hardly a station of trust, of toil, or of dignity, in the commonwealth, where his name does not appear, though, now, only as a part of former records; and in the regions of science and literature, where we should least expect them, we find the most frequent traces of his efforts, and of his indefatigable industry. Two years only of his life, after he once became a public man, seem to have been left him for private employments. He was, almost forty years, the incessant servant of the public; passing through the responsible offices of a judge of the Maritime, Probate, and Superior Courts; of a representative in the Provincial Congress, and in the State Convention; of commissioner for his own State, and agent for the United States; of public prosecutor; president of more than one learned and charitable institution; projector and member of others; till he sat down in that station which, if the most honorable, he did not suffer to be the most easy, the chief magistracy of this Commonwealth. You, who re-

member the various offices which he has filled, who know the prodigious labor attached to some of them, and the satisfaction which his exertions have given, will acknowledge, with me, that God raised him up to encourage the vigorous application of our powers to purposes of public utility. His voice, if it could now be heard, would call on every young man to repair, without fainting, the disadvantages of birth and education, to disdain the discouragements of poverty, and the decay of years, of health, and of fortune, and to live for others; for the service of our fellow-creatures is the service of God; and never did he yet suffer a service to be lost.

It is grateful to me to turn from the tumult and occupation of his public life, to see him reposing, without an inquietude, on the bosom of that family which God allowed him to rear up to preserve his name, and administer to his increasing infirmities. It is peculiarly grateful to find, that, after discharging, with exemplary filial piety, the duties of a son to an aged parent, whom God permitted to hear of almost all his honors, except those paid to his lifeless remains, he should live to receive from his own children a correspondent recompense. His name promises to live in his offspring; and all, that was excellent in his character, will be transmitted, I trust, to posterity, in their minds, long after the frail remembrance of his person shall have disappeared. They may learn from him to blend the filial piety of a son, the solicitude of a father, the fondness of a husband, and the generosity of a friend, with the paramount duties of a public character. May it be said, without fear of contradiction, as long as they live, "This father did not live for himself!"

The portion of his life and character, which I have been

permitted most intimately to observe, it is my peculiar duty and satisfaction to record. His mind, if I may be allowed the comparison, was like a native forest, which had never been entirely cleared, or carefully divided; where the light gained admission at every opening, and not through any regular avenue; where the growth was rapid and thick, and, though occasionally irregular, yet always strong; where new seeds were successively shooting up, and the materials never seemed likely to be exhausted. I know that men of original thinking, whose minds are at all of a philosophical cast, are tempted, especially when deprived of the discipline of regular education, to speculate too curiously on the subject of Christianity, and to indulge the conceits of a barren skepticism. But, to the honor of our departed chief magistrate I mention it, his faith was never wrested from him by subtlety, nor thrown away, to pursue with more freedom purposes of interest or passion. His early profession of Christianity, his attachment to its ministers, his connexion with several of its churches, and his interest in a rising family came in aid of one another, and of religion, in his mind. And, when his frame was evidently shattered, his compass of ability contracting, the honors of his station fading away in his sight, and he had reason to think that God was calling him to his great account, the faith of Jesus was ever gaining new ascendancy in his views. Here death could gain no triumphs, as he advanced; for so familiar had been his belief, that, when his mind could grasp no other subject, theological ideas seemed entirely at his command; and I can appeal to his family, and my own conversations with him during his sickness, that he seemed as familiar with death as with life. His thoughts expatiated with singular clearness on the scenes which

awaited him, on the mercy of his God, his own unworthiness, and the worth of his Redeemer. I shall not be misunderstood in saying that he seemed, during his last weeks of decay, to be making frequent excursions into eternity, and to bring back with him instruction for his friends, and hope and quiet for his own spirit. I cannot forbear to add that his religion, which had been so fixed in his understanding, sometimes discovered itself in devotional exercises of extraordinary emotion. Those, who have been with him in times of severe trial, know, that, if he had passions, they were not all given to the world. God has seen him at the foot of his throne, pouring out both the joy and the anguish of his feelings. His domestic devotions, as well as private prayers, have reached, I hope, the ear of mercy; — may God have accepted them; and may they be the last of his services, which shall be forgotten!

It cannot be supposed, that a life so various, so busy, and so much exposed to public and private scrutiny, should escape without animadversion. But, whatever opinions may have been entertained of his public character by those who differed in important maxims of political conduct, the salutary effect of many of his labors will, I think, hardly be disputed: the poor often found him an unrecompensed advocate, the distressed a willing benefactor, the clergy an active and hospitable patron, and the public a servant continually engaged in some project of utility, who has, at last, left behind him only the small remains of a fortune which, in many other hands, would have been greatly accumulated. He died at a period, when his enfeebled powers of public service were most industriously employed; and in a station, where he had never lost sight of that hopeless conciliation of parties, with which he

ventured to flatter himself and his friends. The extreme placability of his temper will not be denied by those who have been brought into the most frequent collision with him; and it must be acknowledged, that he endeavored to mitigate the asperity of our dissentions, and offered a resistance, not always ineffectual, to the violence of party. His family and friends have reason to bless God, that, as his life was prolonged, the hostility of his opponents was, in a great degree, disarmed: and, perhaps, at no period of his public career would the wishes for his continuance have been more general or fervent than at the moment, when God chose to take him from the world, and transfer our empty honors from the living to the dead. I look round, and the place, which knew him, knows him no more. In this temple, where he worshipped, he is no longer seen. O God, may he have found a seat in the vast congregation of thy people!

His afflicted widow, who knew his most secret thoughts, and domestic virtues, will bear me witness, that I appear not here a partisan for the dead. If I have brought back the image of her departed husband to her thoughts, God knows, I would now bring it back only as a messenger of peace and consolation. And you, dear children, your father's voice cries to you from his tomb, "Live not for yourselves!" The last whispers of his breath taught you this lesson; and you have much to do, to supply his place in all its activity and influence. May God consecrate your talents, your means, and your example to the cause of truth, probity, peace, and public happiness! Place God continually before you; for he only can completely supply the absence of a human father; and, when you find the charm of this world's attractions sensibly diminishing, do not for-

get that your father died not for himself, but for you, if, instructed by his example, you should have the happiness to die in the faith of Jesus.

My hearers, you have come up hither to listen to the praises of the dead; I have gained my purpose, if you retire with the conviction, how empty are the praises of a mortal. The ear is deaf which once heard me; the tongue of the orator is motionless; the lips cold and rigid on which persuasion hung; and the hand, which held the pen, and bore the sword and staff of office, fast clenched in death. And, having seen all this, can you go away, and think of anything but God? Can you forget, in an instant, the inexpressible vanity of this world's honors? They have only dressed up another victim for the tomb. We have bestowed upon the departed all that man had to bestow; the pomp of procession, the spectacle of numbers, the solemn knell of departed dignity, the noise of military honors, the pageant of a funeral, tears, prayers, condolence, the decorated coffin, the long inviolated tomb, — all, all was to be found, but him on whom these honors were bestowed. Every eye and ear were sensible to this respect, but his to whom it was paid.

And now the noise of the crowd has ceased, the pageantry of office has vanished, and the tomb is still; is there nothing left of the loftiest officer of a commonwealth? Nothing, my friends, of all his honors, but the services which he has rendered to society. What he did for himself is no longer heard of; what he did for others can only enbalm him. The Governor is forgotten, the show of public respect has vanished; but the least remembrance of real usefulness and piety is eternally fresh. "Be wise now, O ye rulers; be instructed, ye judges of the earth." You

see what remains of the common objects of human ambition; a public funeral, and a quiet grave! and even these are left for your insensible remains. Live, then, for God, and for society, while you live; for God and goodness only are eternal.

When I look back upon the successive generations of men, and see how painfully they have been climbing to the heights of temporal grandeur; when I examine the empty decorations of mortal greatness, and observe the little brief authority, the parting ambition, the pitiable pride, the wreaths withered as soon as plucked, and the grave opening under the very chair of supreme authority, I am ready to cry, God have mercy upon the great, and forgive the pride of shortlived man, in that hour, when the naked spirit shall stand trembling in thy presence, and it is no longer remembered, whether it expired on a scaffold, or on a throne!

I think, when you have been standing around the open tombs of the eminent, you must have asked yourselves, Is this dust of their coffins all that remains of the dignity we remember? In such moments, surely, you cannot have found the gospel as barren of all truth and consolation, as the splendor, you have witnessed, is barren of all real satisfaction. You cannot have turned your eyes away from the glory which breaks from the region beyond the grave, to let them rest again on the shadows, the retreating shadows, of this unsubstantial world. Oh no! hearers, friends, mourners, Christians let me call you! If, when you surrounded the grave of the departed, a ray reached your mind from the seat of eternal day, O let it never be extinguished! "For the hour is coming, in the which all, that are in the graves, shall hear the voice of the Son of Man

and shall come forth; they, that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they, that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God. — And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write: Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord! — for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." Amen.

DISCOURSE.

[Delivered at the Interment of the Rev. William Emerson, May, 1811.]

THE circumstances, in which we assemble here, to pay our last respects to this departed servant of God, are too mournful and extraordinary not to be distinctly remarked. Within a very few weeks,* a greater number of ministers have been called away from their mortal service in the churches of New-England, than was, perhaps, ever known before, in the same interval of time. In this town, there still vibrates on the ear the funeral bell of one of our beloved brethren. The earth has not yet settled on his remains; the footsteps of the mourners have hardly turned back from his grave, ere another waits for admission, and the bereaved meet and mingle their lamentations. In the meanwhile, it is not to us, nor was it to him, whose remains are before us, merely a fanciful satisfaction, to think that the beloved Dr. Eckley will hardly have left these

* Within the last two months, there have departed this life, the Rev. Dr. Hemmenway, of Wells, a man of extraordinary learning, of apostolical simplicity, and venerable worth; the Rev. Dr. Barnes, of Scituate, the Rev. Mr. Parker, of Provincetown, and some other ministers, whose deaths have been mentioned in the newspapers. Dr. Eckley, senior pastor of the Old South Church, in Boston, was buried on the 3d of May, nine days before the decease of the Rev. Mr. Emerson, whose dissolution was then daily expected by himself and his friends.

regions of mortality, these confines of his former existence, ere this kindred spirit, long waiting to be dismissed, will follow in the still lingering light of his upward track, with the hope, if God so please, of being reünited with him forever.

For those, who have so long been seeking "a better country," even a heavenly, "to depart and be with Christ is far better." But, though we weep not for them who have finished their course with joy, we may weep for ourselves, who are left to keep the faith, and contend in the trials of this uncertain life, with fewer friends, counsellors, and companions.

HELP, LORD, FOR THE GODLY MAN CEASETH; FOR THE FAITHFUL FAIL FROM AMONG THE CHILDREN OF MEN!

These words are to be found in the twelfth Psalm, at the first verse. They have presented themselves to my mind, not as a topic for discourse, but as a faithful expression of the feelings of every good man among us, upon hearing that he shall behold our departed brother Emerson no more with the inhabitants of this world. Help us now, Lord, to lay his death to heart, and to keep him always in worthy remembrance!

Though one of the most common, it is still one of the sweetest rewards of acknowledged and respected virtue, to leave the minds of survivors turning involuntarily toward the contemplation of that worth which they are no longer to enjoy. Then the excellences of the departed take full possession of our imaginations; and we find ourselves engaged in calling up their merits, which, because we had

so little fear of losing, we had, perhaps, undervalued, or not fully regarded. Then, when we find them no more in the places which once knew them, recollection is busy about the spots which they frequented, and there start up a thousand affecting remembrances of their character and manners. When we are called upon to supply their places, the task is found more painful and difficult than we had imagined; and we begin to wish that we had valued them more, and loved them better, as well as enjoyed them longer. The void, left by the death of good men, time does not fill, indeed, but only throws farther back into the retrospect. We come to their last obsequies with unwonted fondness; our lips are ready to show forth their praise; our affections linger about their graves; we feel, more than ever, that we are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," and wish more than ever to "die the death of the righteous," that our "last end may be like his."

This sentiment of posthumous regard, so tender, and yet so strong, is the reward only of genuine worth, and is entirely different from those demonstrations of respect, which are paid to men who have enjoyed the more distinction during life, the less intimately they were known, and whom we consent to bury with honor, to avoid the further expression of our real opinion. He, whose remains are now before us, has left many bowed down with unaffected grief, who come prepared and willing now to dwell awhile on his character. Affection and faithful memory, therefore, will supply whatever may be wanting in the following remarks, which are made with something of that restraint which would be felt, if the departed were now capable of listening to the speaker. For there is something sacred in the presence of his remains, to which reverence and modesty are due, no less than truth and affection.

"The godly man ceaseth." The Reverend William Emerson gave early indications of devotedness to the service of God. He was a descendant of pious ancestors, through many generations; and the only son of one of the most popular and promising ministers of New England, who died early in the American revolution. The mother, who survives to mourn over the death of her son, saw him, with delight, soon giving his attention and studies to the word and ministry of that God to whom the prayers and wishes of his parents had directed his first thoughts. They, who knew him best, during the most trying period of youthful virtue, bear witness to the singular purity of his mind, tenderness of his conscience, devoutness of his feelings, and strictness of his manners; qualities which, by God's blessing, age and experience did not diminish, and which his Christian profession afterwards secured and improved.

In one of the longest conversations which I was permitted to hold with him, a few days before his death, when his mind seemed to be lighted up anew, and his faculties to collect fresh vigor, he expressed the most grateful and pious satisfaction in the circumstance, that he, with all his father's family, had so early felt the obligations of the gospel as to give themselves up to Jesus Christ, by a profession of his religion. The privilege of being a Christian then occupied his thoughts; and he continued to talk, with unusual animation, of the benefits of early communion; and to express his wishes, that his eldest son, then at his bedside, might not forget early to seek, nor be so unhappy as ever to forfeit, this Christian privilege. That great article of the Christian dispensation, the resurrection from the dead, was the frequent theme of his meditations, and of his public instructions; so that his faith was not vain, nor his preach-

ing vain: for his faith was always strong enough to render his preaching the expression of his own intimate persuasions, and the cheerful employment of his life.

Of the practical strength of his faith and piety he was permitted to give us a memorable example, during that sudden attack which he sustained a few years since, in all the fulness of his health and expectations, when he was busily preparing for a public service. Those, who then saw him brought down, in an instant, and without any previous warning, to the gates of death, can never forget the steadfastness with which he received the alarm, and the singular humility and composure with which he waited during many days, doubtful of life, and expecting, every hour, to leave all that was dear to him on earth, to present himself before God.* Next to the satisfaction of behaving well ourselves, in an hour of trial, is that of witnessing the tranquillity of our friends, and finding that we need not fear for their example, while flesh and heart are failing, for God is the strength of their heart, and their portion forever.

The same steadfastness, and tranquil foresight of his dissolution, God has enabled him to exhibit, through the whole of the distressing and lingering disorder of which he died. A few hours before his death, he overheard some

* It was in the year 1808, that he was attacked with a profuse hemorrhage from the lungs, from the effects of which he never completely recovered. But the disease, of which he died, had not, probably, the remotest connexion with this bleeding. It appeared, upon examination, that the lower orifice of the stomach was almost entirely closed by a scirrhous tumor, or hard swelling, which on the inside was ulcerated. So completely was the passage of the pylorus obliterated that a drop of water could hardly be pressed through it from the stomach, which was full.

conversation respecting those who should pass the night with him; and he summoned strength enough to articulate, "God is with me!" The great interest, with which some persons always watch the last intelligent exercises of a spirit which has been warned of its departure, was here not disappointed. No one could leave his presence without a secret consciousness, that the collected, intelligent, and strong indications, which he daily gave, of profound submission to God's will, and unshaken faith in his gospel, were very much to be preferred to the indistinct raptures and ejaculations which are so often caught from the lips of the dying, where more is supposed to be meant than meets the ear, and more is put into the speech than was originally contained in the thought. The approach of death gave no new color to his faith; and he has left us a proof, which will long be remembered, not of the truth, indeed, but of the power of those principles by which, for nearly twenty years, he had preached and practised.

He was a faithful, as well as a pious man. Of his fidelity in his ministerial office, you, my hearers, are, of course, better judges than the preacher. But, from his extraordinary correctness of manners, and disposition to method in the disposal of his time, great fidelity might be expected, in what he regarded as his duty; and this sentiment, as well as the desire of doing good, would engage so careful a mind as his in the punctilious discharge of the duties of his profession. The prosperity of this ancient church was peculiarly dear to him. He looked back, with veneration almost unbounded, on some of his predecessors here; and, while he breathed much of their spirit, he successfully emulated their merits. He was a happy example of that correct and rational style of evangelical preaching, of which

the yet lamented Clarke has left so fair a specimen. Our departed brother had long been employed on a history of the First Church; and was engaged in the analysis of the works and character of Chauncy, when his progress was arrested by the disease of which he died, and he was called to join the company of those great and good men whom he had before known only in their works, but now face to face.*

Such is the constitution of society among us, that much of the care of our literary and charitable institutions devolves upon those clergymen who have disposition and qualifications for the task. Mr. Emerson's industry, integrity, accuracy, and fidelity were well known in the numerous societies of which he was a member. The town has lost a diligent observer of its youth and their education; the Academy and Historical Society, an associate greatly interested in their flourishing state; the University, an attentive overseer. The clergy, throughout the country, have lost a hospitable and liberal brother; his family, a most careful and excellent father, husband, and master; and his friends, an honorable and faithful friend. Now the day is at hand, when, in this town and in this place, will be collected, as usual, many of his friends whom he would have delighted to meet and to honor, how painful is it to think that they will look in vain for this friend of many years! his face will no more greet them, and the place which knew him, will know him no more forever. God hath changed

* If this favorite work should be found, as we have reason to believe, nearly completed, and ready for the press, we hope it will be given to the public, and that our departed brother will find a place in that memorial which he was framing to the honor of those who had gone before him.

his countenance, and sent him away in the midst of his years. He hath died, and wasted away; he hath given up the ghost, and where is he?

Such dark and unsearchable dispensations of Providence are, indeed, God's strange work; and it is impossible, in the present state, entirely to unfold the kindness of his designs, though we may discern enough to pacify our disturbed minds, and to change our most melancholy feelings to those of hope and resignation. It is impossible for us, from whom God has mercifully hidden the future, to tell what evils or temptations any Christian may escape by an early removal from this region of uncertainty. The Preacher once said, "Wherefore I praised the dead, which are already dead, more than the living, which are yet alive." It may be so now. Our departed brother is, at least, delivered from an emaciating and distressing complaint; and what other perils God may have spared him, by this early removal, those may best conjecture, who have lived to weep over others, for whom they would gladly have died; to have their hearts rent by unexpected trials, their prospects darkened by unforeseen calamity, their faith and virtue shaken by the pressure of circumstances, and life worn out, at last, by lingering disorders, and in painful confinement.

> "O! 't is well
> With him. But who knows what the coming hour,
> Veiled in thick darkness, brings for us?"

Still less will the release of good men from their mortal cares and labors suggest any doubts and reproaches of Providence, if we consider that to them it is a welcome dismissal. The longer any Christian, and especially a Christian minister, remains in the world, the more elevated become his ideas of duty; the more laborious and self-

denying will be his occupations. The more good he attempts, the more he finds to do. His calls and opportunities are multiplied by his exertions; and the means of accomplishing all the good, which he imagines and intends, become the more difficult to use with discretion. Often does he form schemes of unattainable amelioration; often does his mind brood over the vices and consequent miseries of society, and droop under the ill success of his own efforts; and rivers of waters run down his eyes, because men keep not God's law. Who can wish to call him back from that world wherein dwelleth righteousness; where there shall be no more curse; where the throne of God and of the Lamb is established, and his servants serve him day and night, and God wipes away all tears from their eyes? Nothing can more clearly manifest our want of faith than excessive lamentations over the pious dead. Oh! if the gates of heaven could be thrown open before us, and the assembly of pure and exalted spirits burst upon our vision, engaged in their blest and noble employments, all our ideas of what the best men might have done, had they continued longer on earth, would surely be lost and forgotten in the glory that would thus be revealed!

My Christian hearers, there lies a friend, snatched, in the midst of life, from the scene of his joys, his usefulness, and his expectations on earth. And does he leave us projecting distant plans of ambition, and saying to ourselves, Thou hast many goods of fortune, and acquisitions of mind, laid up for many years? Does not everything on earth, everything in our religion, tell us that we are but pilgrims and strangers here? Is not the great purpose, for which we are sent into the world, to prepare to leave it, and to leave it better for our residence in it? Shall we put off, then,

till to-morrow, a single good which we may confer to-day? Shall we leave that great work unattempted for which we were all sent into the world, — the work of our salvation?

Let good men learn, also, not to look for the reward of their exertions, and the recompense of their sacrifices, on earth. The most beloved, the most respected men, they, from whose labors and whose friendship we anticipated the most, are often taken away in the midst of their years, to impress it upon our minds, that the ends, at which we should aim in our virtuous actions, are not all to be attained on earth. The only fruits of virtuous exertion, in which we cannot be disappointed, are its effects on our own minds; and the full reward of this is reserved for a future stage of our existence.

Let this dispensation, then, abate that love of the world, which is so fatal to the excellence of our Christian characters. For what does our departed brother now carry with him out of life? Fame? No! he hears not a word of our commendation. Honors? They are paid to his lifeless corpse. Fortune? Ah! his only treasures are in heaven. Genius, learning, accomplishments? They are valuable only as they have made a part of that wisdom which conducts its possessor to salvation. Virtue only remains forever. "This unites us to the whole rational creation, and fits us for conversing with any order of superior natures, and for a place in any part of God's works. Remember that nothing else deserves one anxious thought or wish. Remember that this alone is honor, glory, wealth, and happiness. Secure this, and you secure everything. Lose this, and all is lost." *

* The conclusion of a well known passage in Dr Price's Morals

This dissolution of another dear connexion must also help to loosen, in some degree, our strong attachment to life. Surely, when we return from the grave of our brother, the path, which leads us back to our pleasures and secular pursuits, will not appear so interesting as before. Surely, some of the glare of human life will have faded; and one more affection, one more wish, of our hearts have been transferred from earth to heaven. Surely, we may now give his remains the tribute of one good resolution, which will be more precious than a thousand tears, if the remembrance of him shall help us to keep it.

My brethren in the ministry, — I should not venture to add another word to the repeated and serious applications which, within a few days, have been made to us, did not the succession and variety of joys and sorrows, at which we are called to be present in our profession, tend to make our hearts rather a highway of sentiments than a fruitful soil of good affections, and leave us talking much of the last things, and yet thinking little of them. It is one of the infelicities, or, at least, one of the dangers of our employment, that we, who are constantly engaged in impressing sentiments on others, come, at last, to imagine that we feel their power; and to believe those to be the practical principles of our conduct, which are the most familiar topics of our discourse. The rapid contrasts, also, of life and death, funerals and births, sick chambers and joyful occasions, which are continually calling our attention, and this, too, in public, if they do not harden our hearts, often leave them strangely unaffected, and we become as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, which sound, as they are struck, the tones of joy, or the knell of mourning.

Now here is an admonition offered immediately to us. We are invited to dwell on the image of our decaying, and now departed brother. His health was as firm as ours; his duties as numerous, his purposes as strong, his pursuits as interesting. Nay, more; he had ties, which bound him to life, more strong, more tender, than some of us have ever felt. As we looked forward to the enjoyment of many years in his society, so do we look now at others; so, no doubt, do others look at us. But our ranks are fearfully thinned. Great is the interval between the elder and the younger clergy in this town; an interval now left almost empty. How shall we fill up this chasm, but by increased diligence, fidelity, prudence, and devotion to our Master's service; so that, whether we are summoned unexpectedly away, like one of our brethren, or permitted, like the other, through a lingering sickness, to dress the soul a little more for its appearance before God, we may still be found with our loins girt about, and our lamps burning, waiting for the coming of our Lord?

It was after a short, suffering, and laborious ministry, that Jesus, the great precursor of his faithful ministers, entered into the holiest of all, and sat down at the right hand of God. "He, being made perfect in a short time, fulfilled a long time;" for youth so perfected "shall condemn the many years and old age of the unrighteous" and unprofitable.

The trying scenes of the passing week * offer themselves

* The day preceding the funeral of Mr. Emerson was devoted to the ordination of Mr. Samuel Cooper Thacher to the pastoral care of the New South Church in Boston, made vacant by the removal of Dr. Kirkland to the presidency of the College. The services on this joyful occasion were so tempered by the idea of the unburied remains of our departed brother Emerson, as to render this interesting solemnity unusually serious and affecting.

to us as an epitome of the course of human life. There promise, here disappointment; there expectation, here defeat; there a new gift of heaven, here bereavement and vacancy; there a course commenced with the fairest auspices, here eclipse and disastrous twilight; there prayers and hopes for long life, health, and happiness,—here condolence, lamentations, and tears over a lifeless body. Such, indeed, is the state of man, as it strikes the unpurged eye of earthly ambition. But, in the estimation of him who has the eye of faith, he only has commenced the true life, he only has entered on the eternal service of the temple, he only has been initiated into the ministry of heaven, who has burst the bands of mortality, and gone, with "the first-born from the dead," into the presence of God, who maketh us kings and priests forever and ever.

The members of this afflicted church and congregation will receive with kindness the expressions of our Christian sympathy. Your loss, we know, is the more painful, as your pastor, who was the man of your seeking, is taken away, like his predecessor, in the midst of his years, when everything promised a long career of activity and usefulness. No more will his voice be heard from this desk; no more will his prayers ascend here for your sick, your bereaved, your dying relations. You have come to pay the last duties to him, which he has so often paid to your departed friends. He stops, indeed, once more at this house, but it is on his way to the tomb; and, if he were permitted to address you from that coffin, what could he utter, which he has not a thousand times repeated from this place? He could only address you as a congregation who, like him, have stopped here this day, on the way to your

own tombs, and commend you to God, and the word of his grace. "Yet a little while," would he say, "is the light with you; walk while ye have the light." During the short interval which separates you from him, "continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers;" and those good things, "which ye have both learned and received, and heard and seen in him, do;" "be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

The church, which has now, for more than ninety years, been associated with this, in some of the services of Christian fellowship, offers you her affectionate condolence. In times of bereavement and privation, we have shared liberally in the attentions of your deceased pastor. Often have we "walked to the house of God in company," and put up our prayers together; and henceforth, where two or three of us are met together in the name of Christ, the remembrance of him shall mingle with our services. For myself, I thank God for all that I have known of your pastor; how holily, justly, and unblamably he behaved himself among you that believe; and, especially, that I was permitted to observe the power of his faith, and the deepness of his resignation, and to be comforted with the kindness of his affection, even to the last.

In looking over the list of our predecessors, I find the names of Colman, Foxcroft, Cooper, Chauncy, Clarke, Thacher, and now, alas! Emerson, who have successively been called to perform this last service, before they were themselves brought into the house of God, no longer the living speakers, but the lifeless subjects of discourse. Such has been the order of their removal from office; such the

order in which the survivor has stood over the remains of his brother; thus have they followed, in alternate regularity, to the place appointed for all living.

The afflicted widow and orphan children we commit to the Father of the fatherless, and the widow's God. We beg the mercy and comfort of God for them, for the sisters, and brothers, for the aged mother, the venerable father-in-law, and near friends of the deceased. Remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father." But hearts, that are deeply rent with sorrow, derive no pleasure from public consolation, and we forbear.

If, however, upon leaving the funereal gloom of this solemnity, to follow the body to the tomb, the mourners should see nature clothed in her gayest colors, and find the time of the singing of birds to have come, and everything awaking to life and beauty in the natural world, let not the contrast of the world without and the world within you shed a deeper sadness over your depressed and feeble spirits; but, on the contrary, let it raise your imaginations to the spring-like consequences of a virtuous life and death, and give you a secret anticipation of that beauty and vigor which shall reänimate the dead, as soon as the spirit of God breathes on the valley of death.

"Look nature through; 't is revolution all;
All change, no death; day follows night, and night
The dying day; stars rise, and set, and rise.
Earth takes th' example. See the Summer gay,
With her green chaplet and ambrosial flowers,
Droops into pallid Autumn; Winter gray,
Horrid with frost, and turbulent with storms,
Blows Autumn and his golden fruits away,
Then melts into the Spring; soft Spring, with breath

> Favonian, from warm chambers of the south
> Recalls the first. All, to reflourish, fades,—
> Emblems of man, who passes, not expires."

Or, if this seem to be but the language of fancy and of poetry, and, therefore, barren of consolation, let us go to the oracles of truth, of which the departed was an interpreter, and which are as rich in consolation as in admonition.

There may you behold, with the eye of faith, the temple of God opened in heaven, and the glory of the Ancient of Days, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. "And lo! a great multitude, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," standing before the throne of the majesty on high, "clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands."

Do you ask, "What are these, and whence came they?" "Here is the patience of the saints." These are they that have kept the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. They "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." They have come out of great tribulations; for their delight was in the law of the Lord, who hath guided them by his counsel, and now receiveth them into glory.

"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him, day and night, in his temple; and he, that sitteth on the throne, shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, — and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." Their labors are finished, their righteousness is perfected. In their "Father's house are many mansions," and an eternal and exceeding weight of glory. For they are come to "the city of the living God, the heavenly

Jerusalem." They are come to the general assembly of the church, and "to the spirits of just men made perfect," and "to an innumerable company of angels," and messengers of God's word, and to Jesus, the Mediator, and to God, the Judge and Father of all; where "they, that are wise, shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they, that have turned many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever." "Wherefore, comfort one another with these words."

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP.

[Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. C. Lowell, Jan. 1, 1806.]

The decorum, which belongs to this place and to this occasion, does not allow me to express all the pleasure which I feel, upon being called to begin the year by greeting a friend and classmate, under the new, but not unexpected, relation of a brother in the gospel. If, in offering you the fellowship of the churches, I should suffer myself to dwell with too much fondness on expressions of personal good-will, you, I know, would forgive me, but I should hardly have performed the duty assigned me by this honorable council.

In their name, therefore, and by their direction, I now present you this right hand of fellowship. Interpret it as the symbol of union; as a pledge, freely granted you, of our coöperation, counsel, and support. But it intimates yet more. It signifies affection, as well as concord. Take it, then, again, my brother, as a testimony of our Christian charity, which we pray may never fail; of our joy, which we hope will never be abated; of our expectation, which we trust will not be disappointed. We and our churches are by this act united, not in the bonds of an ecclesiastical league, not under the dominion of an infallible superior, not for the purpose of strengthening the secular influence of our religious societies, nor in the spirit of any selfish and

mercenary connexion; but in those equal and spiritual ties, which God has hitherto blessed and hallowed to the peace of the churches of New England. For we are united in the same faith and profession, in the same duties and hopes, in the same ordinances and liberties, and, as we trust, in the same spirit also, under one Lord, even Jesus, and "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all."

Are not these grand principles of common faith in the divine authority of our religion, and common desires to promote the holy influence of its laws, strong enough to bind our hearts together, though our speculations may sometimes warp asunder? Is there not, amidst all the varieties of discipline and faith, enough left to us in common to preserve a unity of spirit? What though the globes, which compose our planetary system, are, at some times, nearer, than at others, both to one another and to the sun, now crossing one another's path, now eclipsing one another's light, and even sometimes appearing to our short-sighted vision to have wandered irrecoverably, and to have gone off into boundless space; yet do we not know that they are still reached by some genial beams of the central light, and continue, in their wildest aberrations, to gravitate to the same point in the system? And may we not believe that the Great Head of the Church has always dispensed, through the numerous societies of Christendom, a portion of the healing influences of his religion; has held them invisibly together, when they have appeared to be rushing farthest asunder; and, through all the order and confusion, conjunction and opposition, progress and decline of churches, has kept alive in every communion a supreme regard to his authority, when clearly known, as a common principle of relation to him and to one another?

It is not with you alone, my brother, that we express our fellowship, but with this church also, which has spread out her arms to receive you, as a gift of God. Brethren, we rejoice in your prospects, which, as they should be, are brilliant; for your history has been illustrious, and we respect you, when we venerate your pastors. Surely, the desk, where such men as Mayhew and Howard have stood, is privileged above the common walks of public instruction. May we not venture to express our fellowship with them, also, though departed? God grant, that we may, some time, join their communion! But their light has not yet vanished, though their orbs have set. Of Mayhew we have heard and read only, but enough to know that posterity will hear and read of him also. They will be curious to learn more of that intrepid spirit which nothing could depress, of that vigorous understanding which broke so easily the little meshes which were spread to entangle it. However they may hesitate to follow him in all his speculations, they will never hesitate to admire his noble attachment to his country, its liberties, its churches, and its literature; they will not be interested to depreciate the independence of his virtue, the manliness of his piety, and his undissembled love for the cause of the Redeemer. Howard we have seen; and who, that has seen him, has forgotten the patriarchal simplicity of his character, united with a tenderness which would have been admired even in a brother? Who, that knew him, is not eager now to assure us that he had ingrafted the most sublime virtues and honorable accomplishments of his predecessor on the sound and uncorrupted stock of his own integrity? But we forbear, for we remember the words of one of their contemporaries: "He, who flatters the dead, would deceive the living."

Such, my brother, are the men who have gone before you. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." These have rested from their labors, and you have entered into the field, and, I doubt not, into the fruit of their labors. God grant you his presence and his smiles! And, if I might be permitted now to express a wish for you and for myself, it would be this: that our gracious Master, who, when he was on earth, sent forth his seventy evangelists, by two and two, to preach the gospel in Judea, would send us forth together by his authority, would permit us to travel in company through the journey of a useful ministry, and would enable us to return to his presence at last, rejoicing to find that our names have been written, with the names of our people, in "the book of life."

DISCOURSE

ON THE

DANGERS AND DUTIES OF MEN OF LETTERS.

[Pronounced at Cambridge before the Society of Φ. B. K., on Thursday, August 31, 1809.]

It is not without reluctance, my friends, that I appear before you this morning; not because I feel any distrust of your candor, but because I find it so difficult to offer you anything which shall be worthy of your candor. The orator, on this occasion, as he has no definite object, is not restrained in the choice of his topics. This appears, indeed, to be a privilege; but others, I doubt not, as well as myself, have found themselves embarrassed by the liberty of choosing without direction, and their spirits exhausted by indecision, before the thoughts were fixed, as they were, at last, by necessity.

When I look round, however, on those whom I am called to address, and find them to be men with whom learning is, at least, in esteem; men, too, whose mutual friendships, as they commenced on classic ground, will always preserve, I trust, something of the raciness of their origin, I should think myself unfaithful to this occasion, and

to the character of the audience, if I were to choose any other subject than that which is common to us as scholars. For, however different our professions, opposite our connexions, wide our opinions, or uncertain our destinies in life, in this we agree, that letters have been our study, perhaps our delight. By these we are to live; and by these, too, *si qua fata aspera sinant!* we are to be remembered. In your company, then, I have no inclination to stray beyond the gardens of the Academy, or within the noise of the city and the forum.

Is there a man, who now hears me, who would not rather belong to an enlightened and virtuous community than to the mightiest empire of the world, distinguished only by its vastness? If there is, let him cast his eye along the records of states. What do we now know of the vast unlettered empires of the east? The far extended conquests of the Assyrian hardly detain us a moment in the annals of the world, while the little state of Athens will forever be the delight of the historian and the pride of letters; preserving, by the genius of her writers, the only remembrance of the barbarian powers which overwhelmed her. To come down to our own times; who would not rather have been a citizen of the free and polished republic of Geneva, than wander a prince in the vast dominions of the Czar, or bask in the beams of the present emperor of a desolated continent?

In the usual course of national aggrandizement, it is almost certain, that those of you, who shall attain to old age, will find yourselves the citizens of an empire unparalleled in extent; but is it probable, that you will have the honor of belonging to a nation of men of letters? The review of our past literary progress does not authorize

very lofty expectations, neither does it leave us entirely without hope.

It is our lot, to have been born in an age of tremendous revolution; and the world is yet covered with the wrecks of its ancient glory, especially of its literary renown. The fury of that storm, which rose in France, is passed and spent, but its effects have been felt through the whole system of liberal education. The foul spirit of innovation and sophistry has been seen wandering in the very groves of the Lyceum, and is not yet completely exorcised, though the spell is broken. When we look back to the records of our learning before the American revolution, we find, or think we find, at least in New England, more accomplished scholars than we have since produced; men, who conversed more familiarly than their children with the mighty dead; men who felt more than we do the charm of classical accomplishments; men, in short, who had not learned to be ashamed of being often found drinking at the wells of antiquity.* But so greatly have our habits of thinking been disturbed by the revolutions of the last thirty years, that the progress of our education, and, of course, the character of our learning, have not a little suffered. It is true, we have shared the detriment with Europe; but the effect upon us, though, perhaps, temporary, has been

* Chief Justice Pratt, James Otis, Prof. Sewall, Bowdoin, Winthrop, Chauncy, perhaps from the natural effect of distance, appear to us to have been eminent scholars. Whether in New England we have since produced their superiors, *docti judicent*. There are now living a few men, who were educated before the revolution, whom we should be proud, though not, perhaps, at liberty, to name. We can only wish that they may long animate us by their living example, rather than by their remembrance.

peculiarly extensive and unfortunate, because our government and our habits were, in some degree, unsettled.

In France* and in some other countries of Europe, what literature has lost seems to be compensated by the progress of science. In England the trunk of her national

* We have lately seen a discourse of M. Dacier, Secrétaire perpetuel de la Classe d'Histoire et de Littérature ancienne de l'Institut, delivered 20th February, 1808, before the Emperor, on presenting a report of the progress of literature in France during the last twenty years. This class of the Institute, which comprises very nearly the same objects with the Ancient Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres, and to which its remaining members have been transferred, was charged by the Emperor with an inquiry into this subject, preparatory to some steps, which will be taken, to revive these studies. The following extracts are made here; the first, because it gives a very accurate definition of the different objects and value of literature and of physical science: the others, because they contain the deliberate result of the inquiries of a body of men of letters on the present state of French learning.

"Si les sciences de calcul et d'observation ajoutent à nos jouissances physiques, et nous en font espérer de nouvelles pour l'avenir, les sciences morales exercent leur empire sur l'âme; elles l'éclairent, la dirigent, la soutiennent, l'élèvent, ou la tempèrent; elles avancent ou conservent la civilisation; elles apprennent à l'homme à se connoître lui-même, et lui donnent, dans tous les temps, dans tous les lieux, dans toutes les conditions, ce bonheur dont les autres sciences ne peuvent lui promettre que des moyens."—p. 5.

"Votre Majesté verra que, malgré les troubles politiques qui ont agité la France, elle n'est, jusqu'à présent, restée en arrière dans aucune des branches de la littérature; mais c'est avec un sentiment pénible que nous sommes forcés de lui faire apercevoir que plusieurs sont menacées d'un anéantissement prochain et presque total. La philologie, qui est la base de toute bonne littérature,

learning was so deeply rooted that it has been swayed only, and not injured, by this tempest of reform. It yet retains its vigor, and, we doubt not, will entirely recover its former direction. But here, the French revolution, immediately succeeding our own, found the minds of men in an unsettled state, and, as you may well imagine, did not help to compose them. Our forms of education were becoming

et sur laquelle reposent la certitude de l'histoire et la connoissance du passé, qui a répandu tant d'éclat sur l'Académie des belles-lettres que notre classe doit continuer, ne trouve presque plus personne pour la cultiver. Les savans, dont les travaux fertilisent encore chaque jour son domaine, restes, pour la plupart, d'une génération qui va disparoître, ne voient croître autour d'eux qu'un trop petit nombre d'hommes qui puissent les remplacer; et cette lumière publique, propre à encourager et à juger leurs travaux, diminue sensiblement de clarté, et son foyer se rétrécit tous les jours de plus en plus. Faire connoître le mal à votre Majesté, c'est s'assurer que votre main puissante saura y appliquer le remède."— pp. 6, 7.

"Cependant, en France, quelques hommes de lettres continuoient, dans le silence de la solitude, leurs études et leurs travaux; et, dès que les circonstances l'ont permis, on a vu paroître dans les collections de l'Institut un assez grand nombre de notices de manuscrits et de mémoires relatifs à notre histoire du moyen âge et à la diplomatique. Le quatorzième volume du Recueil des historiens de France a été publié par les ordres et sous les auspices du Gouvernement; le quinzième s'imprime, ainsi que le quinzième volume du Recueil des ordonnances des rois de la troisième dynastie françoise. D'autres ouvrages du même genre, qui ont été interrompus, attendent encore, à la vérité, des continuateurs; et nous sommes obligés d'avouer, quoiqu'à regret, à votre Majesté, que nous ne pouvons espérer qu'ils en trouvent tous, à moins qu'un de vos regards puissans ne ranime ce genre d'études dans lequel la France s'est illustrée, pendant plus de deux siècles, *et qu'elle paroît aujourd'hui avoir presque entièrement abandonné.*" — pp. 13, 14.

more popular and superficial; the knowledge of antiquity began to be despised; and the hard labor of learning to be dispensed with. Soon the ancient strictness of discipline disappeared; the *curriculum* of studies was shortened in favor of the impatience or the necessities of candidates for literary honors; the pains of application were derided; and a pernicious notion of equality was introduced, which has not only tainted our sentiments, but impaired our vigor, and crippled our literary eminence.

This secret influence of public opinion, though not easily described, has been felt and lamented by many of us, who were educated in the present generation. We have many steps to recover; and, before we shall travel in the suite of the learned in the old world, we have some long strides to make. Our poets and historians, our critics and orators,* the men of whom posterity are to stand in awe and by whom to be instructed, are yet to appear among us. The men of letters, who are to direct our taste, mould our genius, and inspire our emulation, the men, in fact, whose writings are to be the depositories of our national greatness, have not yet shown themselves to the world. But, if we are not mistaken in the signs of the times, the genius of our literature begins to show symptoms of vigor, and to meditate a bolder flight; and the generation, which is to succeed

* That we have had poets, critics, and historians, is not denied. Belknap and Minot have furnished us good specimens, and Dr. Holmes valuable materials, for which our future historians will give them credit and thanks. All, that is meant here, is, that we have not yet produced standards, or models, in these departments of literature. We have, also, now among us, men who want nothing but the discipline of a more thorough education, to be consummate orators, worthy of any age or nation.

us, will be formed on better models, and leave a brighter track. The spirit of criticism begins to plume itself, and education, as it assumes a more learned form, will take a higher aim. If we are not misled by our hopes, the dream of ignorance is, at least, disturbed; and there are signs that the period is approaching in which it will be said of our own country, "*Tuus jam* regnat Apollo."

You, then, my friends, are destined, I hope, to witness the dawn of our Augustan age, and to contribute to its glory. Whatever may be your place in society, I am confident you will not willingly discard the love of virtue and of knowledge; and it is with this confidence, that I shall now venture to speak to you of some of THE DANGERS AND DUTIES OF MEN OF LETTERS. The subject is copious; and what will now be offered is a mere essay. If it should be found suitable to this occasion, and to the actual state of our literature, my purpose will be answered.

Everywhere there are dangers and evils, of which some affect the intellectual improvement, and others are unfavorable to the moral worth of literary men. In this country, especially, it too often happens, that the young man, who is to live by his talents, and to make the most of the name of a scholar, is tempted to turn his literary credit to the quickest account, by early making himself of consequence to the people, or, rather, to some of their factions. From the moment that he is found yielding himself up to their service, or hunting after popular favor, his time, his studies, and his powers yet in their bloom, are all lost to learning. Instead of giving his days and nights to the study of the profound masters of political wisdom, instead of patiently receiving the lessons of history and of practical philosophy he prematurely takes a part in all the dissensions of the

day. His leisure is wasted on the profligate productions of demagogues, and his curiosity bent on the minutiæ of local politics. The consequence is, that his mind is so much dissipated, or his passions disturbed, that the quiet speculations of the scholar can no longer detain him. He hears, at a distance, the bustle of the Comitia, — he rushes out of the grove of Egeria, and Numa and the Muses call after him in vain. It is, perhaps, one of the incurable evils of our constitution of society, that this ambition of immediate notoriety and rapid success is too early excited, and thus the promises of literary excellence are so frequently superseded.

The history of genius is not wanting in examples of powers thus perverted, and passions too early inflamed. If we may go so far back for examples, we find them in Alcibiades and the Gracchi; men educated with all the advantages which Greece and Rome could bestow, and yet lost to everything but faction. There are, no doubt, many other instances, but most of them are not now to be recovered from oblivion; for the records of civil dissension, let it be remembered, are not so lasting as those of learning. Here I should be tempted to adduce even the name of Burke, and support myself by the authority of Goldsmith, who ventured early to lament that he

> "narrowed his mind,
> And to party gave up what was meant for mankind." *

But the awful history of our own times has persuaded me to forbear; for of Burke, at least, posterity will never cease to say, *What he gave up to party, he gave to mankind.* The life of Milton, however, is a memorable instance of the

* Retaliation.

temporary degradation of learning. For, notwithstanding the sublime fiction of Gray,* that the loss of his sight was occasioned by the brightness of his celestial visions, it is, alas! nothing but a fiction. Those fine orbs were quenched in the service of a vulgar and usurping faction; and, had they not been thus early "closed in endless night," the world, perhaps, would have wanted the Paradise Lost, and that master-spirit of England have been wasted in more praises of Cromwell and more ribaldry against Salmasius. You, then, who are impatient to take a part in public life, remember that there is hardly to be found a consummate statesman or warrior in a literary age, who was not himself a man of letters. I will not weary you by an enumeration; but you will instantly call to mind Alexander, the accomplished scholar of Aristotle; Cæsar, at the head of Rome, the *deliciæ literatorum;* Charlemagne, master of all the science that an ignorant age could afford; Alfred, the philosophical translator of Boëthius; and Frederic, who gathered around him the great men of his age, not so much their patron as their competitor.

On the other hand, there are some finely attempered spirits, who, disgusted at the grossness which belongs to the common contests and occupations of active life, are in danger of entirely relinquishing its real duties in the luxurious leisure of study. In the actual state of the politics of our country, this opposite temptation has been already felt by many studious minds. The young man, early enamored of literature, sometimes casts a disdainful glance at the world, and then sinks to repose in the lap of his mistress. He finds it easier to read than to think, and still easier to

* Ode on the Progress of Poesy, III.

think than to act. His indisposition increases by indulgence. His learning becomes effeminate. He reads to furnish amusement for his imagination, not to provide materials for intellectual greatness. He passes his time among the Muses, it is true; but it is the Graces, who mingle in the circle, that engross his attention; and his life, though nominally given to contemplation, is little else than

> "To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
> Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair." *

He goes to his books, to enjoy a certain mild delirium of the mind, regardless of the claims of society, and of the account, which he must give, at last, of his studies and advantages. Whenever he comes out into the world, he thinks it was not made for him; and soon returns, in disgust, to seek relief in that employment which has been admirably called the "invisible riot of the mind, that secret prodigality of being, secure from detection, and fearless of reproach." †

The history of letters does not, at this moment, suggest to me a more fortunate parallel between the effects of active and of inactive learning than in the well known characters of Cicero and Atticus. Let me hold them up to your observation, not because Cicero was faultless, or Atticus always to blame, but because, like you, they were the citizens of a republic. They lived in an age of learning and of dangers, and acted upon opposite principles, when Rome was to be saved, if saved at all, by the virtuous energy of her most accomplished minds. If we look now for Atticus, we find him in the quiet of his library, sur-

* Milton, Lycidas, 68. † Rambler, No. 89.

rounded with books; while Cicero was passing through the regular course of public honors and services, where all the treasures of his mind were at the command of his country. If we follow them, we find Atticus pleasantly wandering among the ruins of Athens, purchasing up statues and antiques; while Cicero was at home, blasting the projects of Catiline, and at the head of the senate, like the tutelary spirit of his country, as the storm was gathering, secretly watching the doubtful movements of Cæsar. If we look to the period of the civil wars, we find Atticus always reputed, indeed, to belong to the party of the friends of liberty, yet originally dear to Sylla, and intimate with Clodius, recommending himself to Cæsar by his neutrality, courted by Anthony, and connected with Octavius, poorly concealing the epicureanism of his principles under the ornaments of literature and the splendor of his benefactions; till, at last, this inoffensive and polished friend of successive usurpers hastens out of life to escape from the pains of a lingering disease. Turn now to Cicero, the only great man at whom Cæsar always trembled, the only great man whom falling Rome did *not* fear. Do you tell me that his hand once offered incense to the dictator? Remember, it was the gift of gratitude only, and not of servility; for the same hand launched its indignation against the infamous Anthony, whose power was more to be dreaded, and whose revenge pursued him, till this Father of his Country gave his head to the executioner without a struggle, for he knew that Rome was no longer to be saved! If, my friends, you would feel what learning and genius and virtue should aspire to in a day of peril and depravity, when you are tired of the factions of the city, the battles of Cæsar, the crimes of the triumvirate, and the splendid court of Augus-

tus, do not go and repose in the easy chair of Atticus, but refresh your virtues and your spirits with the contemplation of Cicero.*

A little observation of the state of knowledge in this country brings to mind the remark of Johnson on the learning of Scotland, "that it is like bread of a besieged town, where every one gets a little, but no man a full meal." So it is among us. There is a diffusion of information widely and thinly spread, which serves to content us, rather than to make us ambitious of more. Our scholars are often employed in loose and undirected studies. They read, it is true, but without an object; and lose their time in superficial and unconnected inquiries. Such is the want of leisure in some of our professions, and the necessity of turning our knowledge to immediate account; so defective, in many places, are our rudiments of education, and

* The character of Cicero has seldom been contemplated, as it ought to be, in the whole; and, therefore, of late years, especially since the translations of Melmoth, it has become fashionable to talk of his weakness, and even to impeach his integrity. But the true difference between him and Atticus in their political conduct was, that Cicero was mistaken in always attempting to reconcile the contending parties in the state, when he would have done better to maintain by vigorous measures the cause which he approved; while Atticus was so deliberately or selfishly inactive that he would not even take the pains to conciliate. They, who form their opinions of Atticus only from the panegyric of Cornelius Nepos, may, perhaps, be correct; but even they will esteem him with more or less reserve, according to their previous notions of virtue and their habits of life. But there are some reasons for thinking, not only that Cicero understood his character better than we do, but, notwithstanding their long familiarity, esteemed it less. See Œuvres de St. Real, vol. I., and his translation of the letters to Atticus, *in notis*.

so inadequate the provision made for instructers; so insulated are our men of study in this vast territory, and such is, after all, the genius of our government, that we find few who are willing to pass through the long and severe discipline of early application, and still fewer of whom we can say, γηράσκουσι διδασκόμενοι. We have yet to form systems of more effectual instruction, and to assign the departments of literary labor, where exertion shall be encouraged by suitable rewards. In the meanwhile, in this unsettled state of our studies, let us not weaken our powers by feebly grasping at everything. We have been long enough flying from novelty to novelty, and regaling upon the flowers of literature, till we begin to know *where* learning may be found; it is time now to think of making it our own. The most powerful minds, which the world ever knew, have sometimes dissipated their powers in the multiplicity of their pursuits. Gibbon,* in his masterly portrait of Leibnitz, concludes with comparing him to those heroes "whose empire has been lost in the ambition of universal conquest." If, then, a mind like his, formed for intellectual supremacy, may suffer by designing more than it can accomplish, or by neglecting to concentrate its powers and pursuits, let us not spend our lives in hastily traversing regions of knowledge, which we certainly shall never conquer, and which we may never inhabit, but turn to the patient cultivation of some of the provinces of literature.

The moral defects and faults of temper, to which scholars are exposed, are not peculiar to any country. It is everywhere the natural tendency of a life of retirement and con-

* Antiquities of the House of Brunswick. Ch. I. Sect. 1. Miscellaneous Works.

temptation, to generate the notion of innocence and moral security; but men of letters should remember, that, in the eye of reason and of Christianity, simple unprofitableness is always a crime. They should know, too, that there are solitary diseases of the imagination not less fatal to the mind than the vices of society. He, who pollutes his fancy with his books, may, in fact, be more culpable than he who is seduced into the haunts of debauchery by the force of passion or example. He, who by his sober studies only feeds his selfishness or his pride of knowledge, may be more to blame than the pedant or the coxcomb in literature, though not so ridiculous. That learning, whatever it may be, which lives and dies with the possessor, is more worthless than his wealth, which descends to his posterity; and, where the heart remains uncultivated and the affections sluggish, the mere man of curious erudition may stand, indeed, as an object of popular admiration, but he stands like the occasional palaces of ice in the regions of the north, the work of vanity, lighted up with artificial lustre, yet cold, useless, and uninhabited, and soon to pass away without leaving a trace of their existence. You, then, who feel yourselves sinking under the gentle pressure of sloth, or who seek in learned seclusion that moral security which is the reward only of virtuous resolution, remember, you do not escape from temptations, much less from responsibility, by retiring to the repose and silence of your libraries.

I pass over many of the faults of scholars, and what Bacon calls the "peccant humors of learning," such as the love of singularity, contempt for practical wisdom, the weakness of literary vanity, and the disease of pedantry, to warn you against two principal evils, of which one is that alienation of affection, so frequent among men of letters.

Their history is, too often, that of factions and intrigues, of envy and recrimination. The *odium theologicum* has, long since, become a proverb; and, perhaps, there are few writers whose libraries have not, at some time, been a repository of poisoned darts, and implements of literary warfare. In modern times the licentiousness of criticism has aggravated this evil. The shafts of Apollo, the god of criticism, are as numerous, and often as envenomed, as those which the same god, under a different character, launched among the Greeks at the prayer of Chryses, his offended priest. It is fortunate, however, that in the arrows of criticism the smart of the wound is greater than the danger. Authors, jealous of reputation, or conscious of merit, have lost all the influence of their philosophy and all the meekness of their religion under anonymous attack, or in their ardor for repelling it. It is painful to dwell on the animosities of the learned, however just they may sometimes appear; but it is well for us to know that the last lesson, which great minds learn, is to bear a superior, or be just to a rival. Even Newton and Leibnitz (and I can go no higher) were alienated and debased by their mutual jealousy. They separated, they accused, they recriminated; and the cool mathematicians of Europe were heated by their quarrels. When we read the works of these two sublime men, we should as soon have expected a collision in the celestial spheres which they were in the habit of contemplating; and, if they have met in the calm regions of intellectual purity and light, no doubt, they are content to leave with posterity their angry dispute * about the invention

* This dispute is related with the greatest minuteness in the life of Leibnitz, by M. le Chevalier de Jaucourt, prefixed to the

of fluxions, and wonder at the imperfection of terrestrial greatness.

The other dangerous infirmity of scholars, against which we should be always on our guard, is the indiscriminate imitation of the eminent. There are many who seek to show their relation to men of genius by exhibiting some kindred deformity. If they know anything of the history of authors, we find them quoting their authority, and seeking shelter behind their defects; if not, they content themselves with copying the irregularities of some living and contemporary genius. It is so old a fiction, that contempt of rules and orders is a constituent of genius, that one would think it should have lost its authority. We have had deep philosophers, who would not have been suspected of thinking, except for their occasional absences of mind; and fine spirits, who were thought to resemble Horace, because they could roar a catch, or empty a cask of Falernian. We have had satirists, with nothing of Dryden but his vulgarity, and of Churchill but his malice; wits, who got drunk, because Addison was not always sober; liquorish writers, in imitation of Sterne; and others foul from the pages of Swift. We have had paradoxes and confessions in the style of Rousseau, without any of his genius, and free-thinkers innumerable of the school of Voltaire, who could

edition of the Essais de Theodicée, printed at Amsterdam, 1747, 2 vols. 12mo., a most interesting piece of biography. The writer is very much disposed to give to Leibnitz not only this honor of the invention of the differential calculus, but the credit of behaving the most honorably in the dispute; but this, I believe, is not the general opinion, at least among the English mathematicians. See Professor Playfair's Second Dissertation on the Progress of Mathematical and Physical Science.

not afford to be, at once, wits and Christians. In a more harmless way, we have had sterile writers, whose veins would flow only at particular seasons; puny moralists, talking big like Johnson; orators, with nothing, as one may say, of Tully, but his wart, and of Demosthenes, but his stammer; in short, my friends, we have had enough of "the contortions of the Sybil, without her inspiration."

The infirmities of noble minds are often so consecrated by their greatness that an unconscious imitation of their peculiarities, which are real defects, may sometimes be pardoned in their admirers. But to copy their vices, or to hunt in their works for those very lines which, when dying, they would most wish to blot, is a different offence. I know of nothing in literature so unpardonable as this. He, who poaches among the labors of the learned only to find what there is polluted in their language, or licentious in their works, — he, who searches the biography of men of genius to find precedents for his follies, or palliations of his own stupid depravity, can be compared to nothing more strongly than to the man who should walk through the gallery of antiques, and, every day, gaze upon the Apollo, the Venus, or the Laocoön, and yet, *proh pudor!* bring away an imagination impressed with nothing but the remembrance that they were naked.

But I must pursue this subject no further. My friends, you, who are now to enter into the world with the fruits of your education here, and you, too, who have, for many years, made learning your employment, permit me to remind you that all our acquisitions are due to that country which gave us birth, to that society which protects and encourages us, to those parents and friends who have aided our progress, and to that religion which is the strength of

our excellence, and which alone promises eternal life and satisfaction to the mind of man panting after truth. Truth, truth is, indeed, the ultimate object of human study; and, though the pleasure of learning is often in itself a sufficient motive and reward, yet are we not to forget that we all owe something to society. That well known tendency of men of letters to inertia and repose must, therefore, be resolutely counteracted. You must tear yourselves away, my friends, from the *noctes cœnæque Deorum*, where you hold converse with the fine spirits of former days, and inquire what you may do for mankind. Learning is not a superfluity; and utility, must, after all, be the object of your studies. The theologian, like Paley, who makes truth intelligible to the humblest; the preacher, like Fénelon, who imparts the divine warmth of his own soul to the souls of his readers; the moralist, like Johnson, who "gives ardor to virtue and confidence to truth;" the jurist, like Mansfield, who contributes to the perfect administration of justice; the statesman, who stems the torrent of corruption, and directs the rising virtue of an indignant people; the philosopher, who leaves in his writings the pregnant germs of future discoveries; the historian, and the poet, who not only preserve the names of the great, but, in words that burn, inflame us with the love of their excellence, are of more value to the community than a whole cabinet of *dilettanti*, and more worthy of your imitation than Magliabecchi, reposing on the ponderous tomes of his library, a mere *corpus literarum*.

You, too, who are about to enter upon the business of manly life, should know that literature, whether it be her pride, or her misfortune, will disdain to divide the empire of your heart. She scorns to enter into partnership with

the love of money, or the ambition of noisy distinction, or with any other inordinate affection. Hardly will she submit to be encumbered with the common worldly anxieties, much less to follow in the train of lust and corruption. Genius, it is true, sometimes bursts through all these impediments; and in the midst of vice and dissipation, and even in the embarrassments of love, has been known to plant his standard on the top of Parnassus. But, in general, and especially in our own country, nothing is more just than the remark of Quinctilian: "Quod si agrorum nimia cura, et sollicitior rei familiaris diligentia, et venandi voluptas, et dati spectaculis dies, multum studiis auferunt, quid putamus facturas cupiditatem, avaritiam, invidiam? Quis inter hæc literis, aut ulli bonæ arti locus? Non, hercle, magis quam frugibus, in terra sentibus et rubis occupata." *

Indeed, my friends, it is time to have done with our short cuts to reputation. Let us no longer think of finding a royal road to learning. It is time that our libraries were better furnished, our presses less prolific, and we not so impatient of being unknown. If there is anything which particularly distinguishes the literature of the seventeenth century from that of the present times, it is, that then the men of letters were willing to study, and now they are in haste to publish. That was the age of scholars; this of readers and of printers. The great men of that age were

* If a solicitous care of our estates, and the love of sporting, and a passion for the theatre, subtract so much from our studies, what can be expected from a mind engrossed with cupidity, avarice, and evil passions? In such a life what place is there for letters, or any honorable pursuit? Indeed, we might as well expect a harvest from a field overgrown with briars and brambles! Quinctilian. Inst. Orat. Lib. 12, cap. 1.

formed like the trees of a hundred years' growth, by perpetually drawing nutriment from the soil, and, at the same time, drinking in the pure air of heaven; while we, like the ivy, slender and rapid in our growth, and full of leaves, are, I fear, of short continuance, except as we learn *to cling around them.*

I should be unfaithful to myself and to the subject, if I should leave it, without mentioning it as the most solemn of our obligations, as scholars, to take care that we give no currency to error or sanction to vice. Unfortunately, there is enough of corrupt literature in the world; and, when the mind has once begun to make that its poison, which ought to be its medicine, I know not how the soul is to be recovered, except by the power of God in his word. Scholars! I dare not say that the cause of religion depends upon the fidelity of the learned; but I do say that gratitude and every motive of virtue demand of you a reverence for the gospel. Protestant Christianity has, in former times, given learning such support as learning never can repay.* The history of Christendom bears witness to this. The names of Erasmus, of Grotius, of Bacon, and a host of luminaries of science, who rise up like a wall of fire around the cause of Christianity, will bear witness to this. They cry out, in the language of Tully: "O vitæ dux! O virtutis indagatrix, expultrixque vitiorum! quid non modo nos, sed omnino vita hominum sine te esse potuisset."† Without this for the guide and terminus of your studies, you may "but go down to hell, with a great deal of wisdom."

* See Dr. Jortin's first charge entitled "Christianity the Preserver and Supporter of Literature." Sermons, vol. vii. p. 353.

† Tusc. Quæst. Lib. v. § 2.

My friends, infidelity has had one triumph in our days; and we have seen learning, as well as virtue, trampled under the hoofs of its infuriated steeds, let loose by the hand of impiety. Fanaticism, too, has had more than one day of desolation; and its consequences have been such as ought always to put learning on its guard. Remember, then, the place where we have been educated, and the pious bounty which has enriched it, for our sakes. Think of the ancestors who have transmitted to us our Christian liberties. Nay, hear the voice of posterity, pleading with you for her peace, and beseeching you not to send down your names stained with profligacy and irreligion. Do you want examples of learned Christians? I could not recount them all in an age. You need not be told that.

> "Learning has borne *such* fruit, in other days,
> On all her branches; piety has found
> Friends in the friends of science; and true prayer
> Has flowed from lips wet with Castalian dews."*

Yes, it has! We have known and loved such men, and, thank God! have been loved by them. There is now present to my mind the image of a scholar, whom some of you knew, (for he was one of us,) and those, who knew him well, will say, with me, he was as pure a spirit as ever tasted the dew of Castalia. How would Walter have delighted in this anniversary! He would have heard me! me, who am now left to speak of him only, and ask for him the tribute, the passing tribute, of your grateful recollection! He would have heard me! It may be, that he now hears me, and is pleased with this tribute.

* Cowper's Task, Book iii.

"Manibus date lilia plenis;
Purpureos spargam flores, animamque amici
His saltem accumulem donis, et fungar inani
Munere."*

It would be ungrateful, to close this subject without thinking of our Alma Mater. Scholars! let us never dishonor her. Let it always be ranked among the most urgent and honorable of our duties, to consult her interests, to watch over her renown, and to gain for her the patronage of the community. You, then, who are alive to the reputation of this ancient university, lend her your effectual influence. Go to the rich, and tell them of the substantial glory of literary patronage. Tell them of the Mæcenases of former days. Tell them that the spirit of commerce has always been propitious to the arts and sciences. Show them the glories of the Medici of Florence; the republican renown of Holland, once studded with splendid universities, and fruitful in great men, fostered by the rich merchants of her cities. Show them that island of the blessed, where so many rich endowments of schools and of literary institutions have mingled forever together the glories of commerce and of science. And, if this will not touch them, read the roll of the former benefactors of our university, of the Hollises and the Hancocks. These were merchants; and men, too, whom posterity will never cease to honor; men whom all the great and good spirits, that

* Æn. Lib. vi. 883.

Bring fragrant flowers, the whitest lilies bring,
With all the purple beauties of the spring;
On the dear youth, to please his shade below,
This unavailing gift, at least, I may bestow!
DRYDEN and PITT.

have issued from this seat of learning, will go and congratulate in heaven, as their benefactors.

> "There sit the sainted sage, the bard divine; —
> Rapt in celestial transport they;
> Yet hither oft a glance, from high
> They send, of tender sympathy,
> To bless the place, where, on their opening soul,
> First the genuine ardor stole." *

But I forbear. The cause of truth and learning is the cause of God, and it will not be deserted. With our Alma Mater, then, we leave our filial valediction; and, in the words of Virgil, where he speaks of Berecynthia, the mother of the gods, we express our most ardent wishes that she may ever be

> "Felix prole virûm: ———
> Læta deûm partu, centum complexa nepotes,
> Omnes cœlicolas, omnes supera alta tenentes." † ‡
> Æn. Lib. vi. 783.

* Gray's Ode for Music.

† "Proud of her sons, she lifts her head on high;
Proud, as the mighty mother of the sky,
When, through the Phrygian towns, sublime in air,
She rides triumphant in her golden car,
Crowned with a nodding diadem of towers,
And counts her offspring, the celestial powers,
A shining train, who fill the blest abode;
A hundred sons, and every son a god!" PITT.

‡ The present state of the University at Cambridge is such, we believe, as must be highly gratifying to its friends. Within a few years the terms of admission have been considerably raised, and a greater strictness of examination introduced. The number of books studied there is increased, and a spirit of application discovers itself, which promises much future excellence. The introduction of Dalzel's Collectanea Majora is a great step towards the

improvement of Greek learning; and a Lord's-day exercise will soon be required of the students in Grotius de Veritate. The professorships of rhetoric and of natural history are noble instances of munificence; and there have been lately added adjunct professors in the two departments of chemistry and anatomy. There is yet, however, much to be done, which calls for the patronage of the rich. A professorship of law, for which there is already a fund, might soon be put in operation with more ample endowments. The salaries of some of the officers require to be enlarged, to induce men of talents to fill these places for any length of time; and the number of tutors might be advantageously increased. But it is peculiarly desirable, that a theological school should be established, where students for the ministry may be supported, and a professor or professors appointed, who shall devote themselves to the instruction of resident graduates in Biblical criticism, and in the qualifications for the pulpit.

It would be a very agreeable employment to some one acquainted with our academical annals, to collect and publish a history of this university, or an Athenæ Harvardienses. In a few years it will become almost impracticable.

EXTRACTS FROM DISCOURSES.

FIRST PUBLISHED IN THE

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE.

EXTRACTS.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

"*Keep yourselves in the love of God.*"
JUDE, 21.

THE love of God is placed in the Scriptures at the head of human duties; and the principle of love itself, exercised towards God and man, is declared to be the substance of religion, and "the fulfilling of the law." The love of God is to be manifested by its influence on our lives; and we are to judge of its intensity, not by ardent expressions of attachment, but by holy and generous obedience to the will, and active coöperation in the benevolent designs, of the Most High.

The man, who loves God, cannot deliberately offend him, or injure the humblest of his offspring. He is penetrated with sorrow, when he has failed in any returns of gratitude, or has long forgotten his Benefactor in heaven. He loves what God loves, and is most happy, when he has the strongest sense of his obligations to his heavenly Father.

I know it is difficult to free this affection from all suspicion of enthusiasm, in the opinion of those who have not God in all their thoughts, or who would make religion a mere exercise of reason, independent of the heart and

affections. Still, it is hard, to believe that a man, who has any sense of goodness or excellence, should be unable to answer the question, Why should we love God?

Men should love God, because they alone of the creatures of this world are capable of loving him. The lower orders of creatures receive, according to their capacities for enjoyment, as many blessings as we do with all our rational prerogatives. But they cannot rise to the conception of a God; they cannot understand that it is he who feeds and comforts them. Yet, as far as they can see the hand that cherishes them, they love their visible patron, and lick the hand which has fed them, even when raised to shed their blood. But it is man, and man only, that can form the vast and beautiful conception of goodness without bounds, of purity without stain, of wisdom without imperfection, of benignity without a shadow of ill-will.

Look up, O man, if there is yet in your heart a sentiment of undepraved goodness, — look up from these miserable objects which enthrall and sink you, and see the Governor of the world, arrayed in all the beauties of holiness, in all the light of truth, in all the mild lustre of unmingled goodness. See in him all that you admire, all that you reverence, all that you honor, all that you aspire to, all that you can love in the good beings you have already known, all that you have felt with complacency in yourself, — see all this concentred, and infinitely exalted, diffused through all nature, and subject to no change, no period, nor limit. This is God! This is the Being of whom you ask, Shall I love him? How low must a man have sunk, ere a doubt could have suggested itself!

But you say, "I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him." O strange perver-

sion of reason! Is it not enough, that he is omnipresent, and fills all worlds, all space, but you must have his form defined and your senses affected, as they are by the imperfect, unsatisfactory objects which you love so unreasonably on earth? This is not worthy of a creature who is able to form the vast, the unparalleled conception of a God, in whom "we live, and move, and have our being."

But do you not discern his influence? Look round upon nature, crowded with proofs of God's goodness. When you know that the powers of any human being, sage, patriot, or benefactor, have been devoted to the production of happiness, though he may have lived in a remote age, a distant country, and entirely out of the reach of your personal knowledge, yet, if you see or hear of the fruits of his exertions, you become interested in such a character, you love and admire him, for the happiness he has produced, even though you have no immediate share. Extend these ideas to God, the great Author of all the felicity there is in the world. Should not your hearts leap to embrace the inexhaustible fountain of the happiness of creation, fountain always full, always overflowing with delight?

Do you ask for illustrations of this character of God, whose "mercy endureth forever?" See, then, in the system he has established, how evil is made subordinate and subservient to good, how temporary sufferings redound to happiness, and are often made beneficial even to the sufferers. If God had given no other proofs of the ineffable satisfactions of virtue, than the invitations held out in the Christian dispensation of grace to repenting sinners, and the spiritual blessings which spring from religion and the promises of the gospel; we should have abundant cause to

admire the wonderful goodness of the Most High, who, as a father, pitieth his children.

But we see the whole earth full of his goodness. We see it in the curious frame of nature, in the course of his providence, in the productions of the earth, the vicissitudes of the seasons, the fruits of industry, and the advantages of commerce. Observe how the same general laws everywhere operate, how the most important blessings are everywhere the most common, and the really necessary seldom anywhere denied.

But the earth is full of entertainment, as well as comfort, of beauty, as well as use; and domestic, social, friendly pleasures are superadded to those of sense. Remark, also, the power of habit, which reduces the inconveniences of life, and the wonderful disposition to hope and anticipate good, which makes life a blessing that we dare not and cannot throw up in despair.

Do you still ask, why you should love God? Love him on your own account. It is the voice of nature, that we should love those by whom we are beloved; and, surely, it is not necessary to produce farther proofs, that we possess not a blessing for which we are not indebted to the love of God. If you will but examine the circumstances of your situation with a view of enumerating the mercies you receive from God, you will find the number swelling above anything you could imagine without such inquiry.

It is under the shadow of his wings that we dwell securely. From him proceed the daily supplies of life. He is the God of all consolation to us, to our friends, to all. Let him but withdraw his arm, and we and all nature vanish together. Let him but withhold his spirit, and this

animated clay crumbles into its original dust. What is it which preserves this curious frame of ours from dissolution? It is but for a few particles of dust to change their dispositions, — and a breath might do it, — then all the living men on earth would go down together to the grave. Let God but speak the word, and al the present tranquillity of your minds would be changed into horror. Did he not continually feed it, the lamp of reason would be extinguished in your minds. Let him but disturb, for a moment, the arrangement of the tender structure of the brain, and your minds would be a rioting hall of wild imaginations, distressful thoughts, and agonizing fears; and, if he please, so it must be forever. If he were to withhold the light of reason and the joys of a good conscience, all the pleasures of an improved understanding might give place to the horrors of remorse, or the dreary quiet of idiocy.

Will you not, then, love him who keeps you from evils like these, which the motion of an atom in the sunbeams might bring upon the finest intellect and the happiest disposition?

And why does God continue to us these essential blessings? Is it because he owes it to our obedience? because we have deserved them for our services, or by our gratitude? The most derpaved conscience can hardly say this. If, then, there is any light in your understanding, any remains of love to friends, of gratitude to benefactors, of affection to parents, or of reverence for the great and good among men; shall God, the supreme Friend, Father, and Benefactor, have no place in your affection?

Although it is so obviously the duty of mankind to love the Author of their being and the source of all their comforts, yet some care on our part is requisite to keep ourselves in the love of God.

The continual succession of present and visible objects tends to efface spiritual ideas from the mind, unless we are careful to associate the idea of God with all we see, with all we enjoy, and with all we suffer. Nay, if we do not seriously attend to the cultivation of the love of God, the very means, by which it should be preserved, may be the means of excluding it from our hearts; and, instead of leading us to him, they may engross our hearts and fix our attention on them.

Some men, who are versed in the visible wonders of creation, have yet never looked beyond the things themselves to God, the Author of all things; and, through a life spent in the study of his works, have not had an affection of which God himself was the object. We may see men deeply interested in the fate of nations, and wrought up in the mighty revolutions of the world, who have not a sentiment of confidence in the Author of all these changes. They regard not his hand, as it gradually draws aside the veil which hid futurity from successive generations. Nay, more, — I am ashamed to say it, — men have had the word of God in their hands, morning and evening, have studied, quoted, interpreted, recommended this book of revelation, and yet the love of God, the Author of that scheme of salvation and dispensation of mercy, has been stranger to their hearts. A cold and dubious light seems to have attended through all their speculations, — a light sprung from the low, damp vapors of an earthly mind.

Would you keep yourselves in the love of God, beware of everything which tends to obscure the perception of his excellence, and deaden the sense of his mercy. Those good men, who feel most habitually the influence of the

love of God, will tell you that it suffers something, even from the usual cares and the indispensable occupations of life; that it requires to be refreshed by the exercises of religion, and by meditations of which God is the immediate object. Why do they withdraw occasionally from the cares of life? Why are they found in their closets and on their knees before their Maker? Why are they so careful to attend on the ordinances of his religion? Why so seriously engaged in public worship? God knows that he has not required this, as needing anything from the creatures which he upholds. Nor do these pious people imagine that by such things they make an atonement for their sins. No! they find these retired and frequent intercourses with God salutary to their dispositions, and necessary to the devotional vigor of their minds; that without them their love languishes, and indifference creeps in unobserved.

Again, would you keep yourselves in the love of God, strive to suppress every evil inclination, and to preserve your hearts as an unpolluted temple, where the fire of love may burn forever. How can he love God, who is under the dominion of passions hateful in the eyes of the Majesty of heaven; or who has constant reason to dread the indignation of the Lord, who searches the heart, on account of inclinations hostile to all virtue, truth, and purity? How can he love God, who feeds a lust which God abhors?

But some will say, "If thus the fear of God is inconsistent with the affection of love, who can entertain it in its purity? Who has not reason to dread the displeasure of the Almighty?" I hope there are those who, though they can never cast off a salutary fear of the Most High, yet have no reason to look up to his throne with dismay. That man,

who is bent on a course of life, which he knows is hateful to God, turns away from him with dread and horror; not so the man who has humbly repented of his sins, and fears he may fall again.

It is perfect love only which "casteth out fear;" and we are not to neglect to cultivate this blessed principle, till all inconsistent principles are removed. Indeed, it is not so much the fear of God, which obstructs the love of him, as the prevalence of iniquity, and the domination of unsubdued lust. The child does not love his parent less because he fears to offend him; nor because he suspects or knows that he has done something by which he has incurred his father's displeasure; but it is the proper combination of the various affections of respect, reverence, sorrow, and hope, which exalts to the highest pitch the sentiment of filial affection. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" and, until we fear him as a God who abhors iniquity, we shall not truly love him.

Would you keep yourselves in the love of God? Then beware of the love of the world and the love of pleasure. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

By the love of the world is meant a supreme and governing regard to the objects which must perish with the world itself, and such as no man can carry with him out of life. You can imagine a man supremely devoted to the acquisition of present possessions. Be they riches, comforts, luxuries, or honors, they will vanish, when death waves his sceptre over the scene of his delights. Nay, you have not to imagine it, you need but go out into the world, and you may see such lovers of the world. Happy is your

case, if you do not find such by duly looking into yourselves. If you have not conceived any happiness beyond what this world affords, and if your wishes are bounded by earthly things, we need not ask whether you love God. These perishable objects answer for you, that they are your idols, and that your gods cannot save you.

O ye worldly men, what is there in the objects which swallow up your thoughts and powers? What is there worthy of this inordinate attachment? Are they really the possessions of the soul? Are they stable and permanent? Do they always answer the fond expectations indulged in the pursuit? Are they so supremely and ultimately good that you may venture to forget him who gives them all their value and on whom their duration depends? Are they so good that God may be lost in the multitude of his benefits? Shall he be unregarded who gives you all you possess? Is it safe, to love everything but the Author of your abundance?

These objects are not eternal. They have never rewarded you for the pursuit of them. They cannot be the final portion of a being capable of intellectual conceptions, and the glory and happiness of a resemblance to thatvery Divinity from whence they flow. The human mind is susceptible of pleasures which these things cannot affect, and without which all the world could not make it happy. There are sources of felicity within the reach of an immortal creature, independent of all those things which perish with the using.

Have you, O man, ever felt the felicity of good affections, an approving conscience, and the hopes of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and can you believe that you were born only to grovel about worldly possessions? Can you look up, as

you sometimes must, from the region of carnality and narrow pleasures, in which you have been toiling, and see the gates of heaven thrown open, and the just ascending with angels to the presence of the eternal Mind, aspiring to the friendship and everlasting enjoyment of God, who is all intellect and goodness, — can you contemplate all this, and not make one effort to break from your enthralment, and to shake off the sordid dust that encumbers you, and try to soar to that intellectual region?

Perhaps you will say you have been misrepresented, that you are really happy in your present slavery to the world, at least, as happy as you wish to be. Be it so. How long will this endure? or of what can it supply the place? Can this world's goods redeem a single man from death? Can it mitigate the agonies of a burdened conscience, or insure an honorable and happy state in that unchangeable world which lies before you?

When your conscience is oppressed with guilt, and alarmed with the prospect of a judgment to come, collect around you all your treasures, — and what is their sum? Of what avail are they now? How they shrink into nothing! On the other hand, when conscience bears testimony to integrity and piety, and you see God waiting to receive you, without all this pomp and glitter, what then are they worth? Sometimes, perhaps, your heart has been rent with grief, or your limbs racked with pain, or your frame has been languishing with sickness; what then was the consolation which this world's goods administered? If it has been your lot, to have known nothing by experience of such sorrows and sufferings, yet the time will come, when you will be on a dying bed, the tide of life will be ebbing away, every breath will seem to

be the last; then, when the invisible world shall open on your soul, what will all these earthly objects be to you? "Keep yourselves," then, "in the love of God," "and wait for his Son from heaven."

THE CHARACTER AND TESTIMONY OF JUDAS.

JUDAS, no doubt, joined our Lord, at first, with the same indefinite expectations as did the other disciples, ignorant of his spiritual character, and anticipating some distinguished worldly advantages. He appears, however, always to have been a man of dark and sordid purposes, and to have interested himself so much in the pecuniary concerns of the company of the disciples that he was chosen to keep the purse which contained the little stock of the fond family of our Lord. The stock, which was partly expended in the occasional purchase of provisions, but chiefly in the relief of the many poor who crowded about our Lord, was entrusted, it seems, to a man who abused the confidence reposed in him, by purloining from the sacred treasury for his own selfish purposes. Jesus, discovering the increasing hold that the love of money was gaining on the mind of Judas, and, perhaps, aware of the crime to which it would, at length, impel him, attempted, more than once, in the most mild and secret manner, to awaken in him a sense of his own character, and, if possible, change his base intentions. It was immediately after the restoration of Lazarus to life, that our Savior and his disciples met at the house of Martha, his sister. The occasion was the most joyful that could be imagined. A brother had just been restored from the tomb to the arms of his affectionate sisters. They were sitting down to supper, when Mary attempts to express her

love and respect for Jesus by anointing him, in the oriental manner, with a pure and costly perfume. One would have thought, that, at such a festival of joy, and in sight of such an act of the most amiable and grateful generosity, even the heart of this avaricious man might have opened, and his mean selfishness have yielded to some transient sympathies with the delighted family. But no! The first thought which struck him, was, "I have lost by this contribution. The expense of this ointment is wasted. It might have been converted into money, and placed in my hands." He cannot conceal his disappointment. "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred denarii, and given to the poor?" Jesus, who knew the secret depravity of his motives, vindicates the generosity of Mary; and Judas, who secretly felt every word of his remarks as a reproach, leaves the room with stifled resentment, and goes to conclude his bargain with the high priests, promising, for thirty pieces of silver, to deliver up the leader, whose disinterested and generous character had become too mortifying a contrast to his own, and whose unaspiring claims had disappointed his own ambitious expectations.

On the evening which preceded the day of crucifixion, the disciples and their Master meet again at the supper. Judas joins them also, no doubt for an opportunity to execute his purposes.

Though our Savior's insinuation, that he knew the character of this man, had failed of recovering him, yet, on this occasion, he attempts again to touch his heart with remorse by unequivocally declaring that he was aware that one of those at table should betray him. The disciples seem struck with sorrow and wonder, and begin every one to ask, "Lord, is it I? Is it I?" Our Savior replies in so ten-

der a manner as, without designating the criminal, and exposing him to the open detestation of the company, might shake the purpose and melt the heart of Judas. His language seems directly addressed to the feelings of the traitor, and is calculated both to move him to tenderness and impress him with fear. "The Son of Man goeth, as is written of him. But alas for that man by whom the Son of Man is about to be delivered up! Good were it for that man, if he had not been born!" Then John, who sat next to Jesus, asks him privately, at the request of Peter, who it was. Jesus answers in the same low voice, so as not to be heard by the rest of the disciples, "It is he to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it." And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Then said Jesus unto him, "What thou doest, do quickly." Now no man at the table knew why Jesus spake this unto him. But Judas, it appears, conscious of his own guilt, instantly conceived that by this action he was singled out as the traitor, and, fired with indignation, he says angrily to Jesus, as if defying the accusation, or contemning our Lord's knowledge of his intentions, "Master, is it I?" and which he has no sooner spoken than he leaves the room, resolved to execute his diabolical design.

It seems, that Jesus had informed the disciples, in the hearing of Judas, that he should retire after supper to the garden of Gethsemane: and Judas took care to convey this information directly to the chief priests, who instantly concluded that it would be a most favorable place for the apprehension of Jesus. It was near the temple, where the Jewish council held their sittings. It was a retired spot, where there was no danger of disturbance from a multitude, who, in the night, especially, would be ignorant of what

was passing. For it is evident, from all the circumstances of our Savior's arrest, from the precipitancy of his trial, and from the importunity of the chief priests that Pilate would pass the sentence and hasten the execution, that they feared, to the very last, an insurrection of the people, in a city so crowded with inhabitants as was Jerusalem at the time of the passover.

Jesus is pointed out to the armed band sent to arrest him, by an insidious act of Judas, which defies all comment. He is hurried away, and soon condemned. The revenge of Judas is accomplished, and he has received also the price of his treachery. But seeing, as it seems, contrary to his expectations, that Jesus was entirely in the power of his enemies, and that without using any means to escape; seeing, also, that the malice of the priests was about to be carried to an extremity which he did not anticipate, even to the crucifixion of his Master, he repents of his baseness, and, oppressed with insupportable remorse, he hastens to the chief priests and throws down the price of his treachery; and, unable to endure the reproaches and terrors of his thoughts, he dies in anguish and horror, leaving these last and memorable words, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."

This testimony of Judas not only establishes the innocence of our Lord, but his history illustrates the purity and excellence of our religion. Judas entered the company of the disciples with worldly and interested views. He expected to find in our Lord a person who would promote and reward his ambition, and indulge and gratify his avarice. It appears, that he was disappointed. He found his mistake, and was enraged. He had intruded into a company, not one of whom had feelings congenial to his own,

and he never could cherish for our Lord that respect which inspired the breasts of the other apostles. Hence his treachery and indignant retreat from their society. Everything he found there, revolted his low-minded and mercenary character. It was not the place for him. He could not breathe so pure an air. He could not endure so holy a society. Indeed, it is an illustrious confirmation of the purity of our religion, that it could not attract and retain such a man as Judas.

To the declaration of Judas, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood," we would call the attention of more modern infidelity. Repulse us not with the contemptuous answer of the high priests, "What is that to us?" Let the descendants of those ancient priests, —let the despised, dispersed, and persecuted nation, who cried out, in their fury, "His blood be on us and on our children," answer what it has been to *them;* and we will show what it is to *others.*

This testimony of Judas we propose now to consider in its peculiar nature, value, and application.

First, it is the testimony of an enemy. It has been suggested, and with great probability, that Judas was intended by his employers to have acted a principal part in the trial of Jesus, had not his premature and unexpected repentance defeated the design. Jesus was accused of pretences to the Messiahship, and represented to Pilate as one who had been saluted by the people with the title of king, a man who was drawing after him multitudes of an inconstant people, and who, therefore, might be dangerous to the Roman power. The high priests thought, no doubt, that they should avail themselves of the testimony of this perjured disciple, and that he would be a principal and important

witness, whose testimony would be the more readily received because he had belonged to the intimate associates of the accused. But the bitter repentance and awful death of the traitor, as soon as the mock trial had been completed in the council of the priests, deprived these miscreants of the man whom they had expected still farther to employ, and they were compelled to suborn witnesses, as they could, whose testimony was found to be utterly inadequate. When Jesus is standing before Pilate, who was waiting for some substantial accusation, and inquiring repeatedly, "What evil hath he done?" why does not Judas appear and publish the crimes for which he had assisted in apprehending him? Ah! the traitor has already gone to appear himself before a bar more terrible than Pilate's. If, when he had delivered up his Master, he could have produced the most insignificant charge, would he not have hastened to communicate it to the delighted ear of Caiaphas? After his treachery had succeeded, when Jesus had surrendered himself without resistance, when he had nothing to fear from the dispersed and timid band of the disciples, was this the time for him to repent of his successful malignity? Would he not, rather, have attempted to recollect something in the character and conduct of Jesus to extenuate his own baseness? and would not the thinnest shadow of fault, appearing in the life of Jesus, have mitigated the intolerable anguish of that remorse which, at last, hurried him to destruction? But no! Judas, who was expected to appear with his accusations, is himself torn by the scourges of his conscience! The traitor trembles in his retreat, and dies in horrible anguish, with a testimony to the innocence of his Master on his lips!

Secondly, the testimony of Judas to the innocence of Jesus

is the testimony of a disciple. Judas, before he conceived his base design, was admitted to the same intimacy with his Master as the other members of the little fraternity of disciples. He had listened to the most confidential conversations. He had been entrusted with the commission of an apostle. He had attended his Master, whenever he retired from the troublesome concourse of promiscuous followers. Nothing, which the other disciples knew of their Master, could have been concealed from Judas. He had been present at his miracles. He had himself, perhaps, been furnished with a share of miraculous powers. If, in these wonderful works, which, if real, proved that God was, indeed, with Jesus, there had been any collusion with the disciples, Judas was a party, and could now bring to light the fraud, and expose the pretensions of the boasted wonder-worker. If there had been any concealed ambition, or defect of honesty or ingenuousness, in our Lord's designs, Judas was in his confidence. Nay, if an unguarded expression had ever escaped the lips of Jesus, the traitor was listening, and ready to record it. But, with all these opportunities of detection and cavil, he found nothing, absolutely nothing. He dies without leaving a suspicion which might veil the disinterestedness of his malice; and his past intimacy with the holy Jesus served but to aggravate the remorse which preyed upon his mind. He shrunk from the task of accusation, though he had been hurried by his resentment to the crime of treachery. He had nought whereof to accuse his Master; and bore his last attestation to the innocence in which the closest intimacy could discover no stain, nor prying malignity detect a cause for imputation of defect.

Thirdly, it is the testimony of a dying man. It is pre-

ceded by his repentance, and sealed with his death. Think of the situation of Judas, and you may conceive how impressive must have been that conviction of the innocence of Jesus, which, in circumstances like these, could so harrow up his conscience. The person, whom he had been instrumental in arraigning, was condemned. Judas had every prospect of favor and consideration with the rulers of the Jews. He had reason to expect that his accusations, if successful, would be rewarded with wealth or office. He had performed a service which, to a sordid and worldly mind like his, promised everything which he could desire. The cause of the Savior was desperate; the cause of his enemies was triumphant; and Judas was the leader, and his claims were preëminent. In this situation of security and hope he is the most wretched of men. Without hesitation, even without a parley with his accusing conscience, he goes, and throws down, in horror, the wages of his treachery at the feet of his employers, and dies writhing with remorse. What an homage is this to the innocence of Jesus! He rushes involuntarily into the presence of his Judge. He flies, black with his crime, into the very light of God's indignation, into the court of eternal retribution, where his silence can no longer suppress the truth of facts, where treachery recoils in vengeance on the traitor, where the judgments of iniquity are reversed, and the accusation of malignity is beaten back upon the accuser. He cannot live even in a region of murderers and traitors like himself. He cannot endure the society of the very men whose desires he had accomplished. Humiliation, and terror, and remorse, and despair lash him out of life. Under the scourge of such a conscience, he leaves his testimony to the innocence of Jesus; and, if we find it not here, where

shall we look for sincerity? Go, wretched and wicked man! Go, with your crimes upon your head! You have left us your testimony, that you sinned, in that you betrayed the innocent blood, — and it is enough!

OUR SAVIOR'S PROPHECY OF THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

"*And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.*"

LUKE xix. 41–44.

WHETHER we consider this passage as a proof of the divine authority and mission of the Messiah, or as a prophetical description of historical events, its importance is remarkable, and nowhere surpassed. In reading it the mind stands aghast at the horrors it predicts, sinks into awe at the foreknowledge by which it was dictated. These sentiments are only heightened by reading the historians of the Jewish war; and the pity, which the calamities of the Jews cannot fail to excite, mingles with the profoundest sentiments of humiliation before the judgments of a retributive and inscrutable Providence.

If it be really true, that a circumstantial prophecy was delivered by our Savior at the time and in the manner which the evangelists have declared, nothing more is wanting to establish the truth of his religion. If it be true, that, forty years before these terrible calamities, and the final overthrow of the Jewish state, Christ forewarned his disciples in the words of this prophecy, the work is done;

nothing more need be adduced in support of his mission and the cause of revelation. "If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

Matthew, Mark, and Luke severally record the prediction of the ruin of Jerusalem; and their Gospels contain numerous references of our Savior to the predicted calamity. After some preliminary observations, I shall attempt to show the fulfilment, not merely of the general prediction, but of the most important of the minuter circumstances.

A conversation of our Savior with the Pharisees immediately preceded the prophecy; in which, after the most moving lamentations over their corruptions, he concluded with the pathetic exclamation, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! — How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

Full of these commiserating thoughts, he went to the Mount of Olives, and sat down in full view of the metropolis of Judea. Before him rose the impregnable walls of the Holy City, and the massy structures with which it was filled. There stood, in all its glory, the temple and its spacious courts, the pride of every Jew, and the admiration even of the Romans. It stood in all the lustre of decoration, in all the grandeur of religion. It was thought by the nation, to be as secure as the throne of God, who filled it with his presence, and as lasting as the eternal hills. The zeal of the nation, and of successive kings, had enriched it beyond the puny magnificence of modern times, and even the conceptions of modern architects. The land of Judea was then at peace. Under the sway of the Romans, everything promised to this tributary nation a tranquillity as

great and as lasting as that of their conquerors. The idea of the ultimate destruction of the Jewish state, or the utter razure of that temple, guarded by Jehovah, had, perhaps, never entered the mind of an uninspired Jew. So far from this, the people were then impatiently looking out for a predicted deliverer, who, as they imagined, would raise the nation to a summit of greatness before unknown, and deposit the spoils of the world, and the trophies of the Roman conquerors themselves, before the altar of the God of Israel.

Such were the prevailing sentiments of the nation; and they had rejected Jesus, because, without the characteristics which they had expected, he claimed the dignity of the Messiah. One of his disciples having desired him to observe the magnitude of the stones of which the temple was built, he replied, "Seest thou these great buildings? The days will come, in which there will not be left one stone upon another, which will not be thrown down." The disciples, astonished at this remark, afterward asked him privately, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign, when all these things shall be accomplished?" In another place the question is stated thus: "What will be the sign of thy appearance, and the end of the age?"

It may be proper to remark, that the common translation, "end of the world," leads into error as to the meaning of some parts of the prediction. Nothing can be more explicit than our Savior's assertion, that the generation then living should not pass away, before all the events, which he had predicted, should be accomplished. From this it would be natural to infer, that the whole prediction referred to the subversion of the Jewish commonwealth, to the destruction of the city and temple, without any reference to the last

judgment, or to the end of the world. The phrase, which is translated "end of the world," may as properly be rendered "end of the age," that is, of the Jewish dispensation.

Our Savior proceeded to reply to the question respecting the signs. In those days of increasing distresses, and impatient expectation of a deliverer, it was natural, that many impostors should appear, claiming this character; and that men oppressed by difficulty and suffering should greedily listen to their promises. To secure, therefore, the fidelity of his disciples, and to keep them from being wrought upon by the pretensions of demagogues assuming the name of the Messiah, Christ forewarned his followers, and said to them explicitly, "Take heed that ye be not deceived. For many will come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and the time draweth near. Go ye not, therefore, after them."

In conformity with this prediction, it is certain from history, that, in the times preceding the calamities of Judea, deceitful men and seducers, under the pretence of a divine impulse, inflamed the expectations of the people, and drew many of them into the desert, asserting that God would there show them signs of deliverance. Josephus mentions several of these impostors, who collected thousands of followers, under the promise of miraculous deliverance. Some of them are mentioned in the speech of Gamaliel, which we have recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

Our Savior goes on to say, "Be not alarmed, when ye hear of wars and commotions, for the end — the final subversion of the Jewish state — is not yet. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be great earthquakes in many places, and famines, and pestilences, and fearful sights, and great signs from heaven."

—Before the siege of Jerusalem, Judea was divided into several kingdoms, and was the scene of great commotions, insurrections, bloodshed, and war. Famines and pestilences are mentioned even by Tacitus, and the whole history of those times is a record of insecurity and misery. It would be easy to refer to particular parts, and to quote authors, but these things must have been observed by those who have read the history of that period. Observe, however, that our Savior says, "These are but the beginnings of sorrow;" and, indeed, they were but a prelude to the greater sorrows which were experienced during the siege of Jerusalem.

In order still farther to secure the fidelity of his disciples, our Lord forewarned them, that, before the destruction of the city, they would be severely persecuted; they should be delivered up, and brought before kings and rulers, for a testimony to the truth of the gospel. Is not the whole history in the Acts of the Apostles a commentary on this?

Our Savior predicted the divisions and animosities which would occur on account of the profession of Christianity, and adds these remarkable words: "Ye shall be hated of all men, for my name's sake."—Let any one compare with this the expressions in the Roman historians, by which the Christians were described, and remember that they were persecuted solely because they bore the name of Christ.

"Iniquity will abound, and the love of many will wax cold."—Compare with this the horrible assertions of Josephus respecting the wickedness of that period, by which he attempted to account for the miseries suffered by his nation.

"Yet," adds our Savior to his disciples, "not a hair of your heads shall perish; by your perseverance ye shall preserve

your lives." — But how were they to escape the general ruin? Our Lord goes on to give directions: "When ye shall see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, and the abomination of desolation standing on the holy ground; then let those, that are in Judea, flee to the mountains; and let not him, that is on the house-top, go down to take anything out of his house; nor let him, that is in the field, turn back to take his garments; for these are the days of vengeance, that all things, which are written, may be fulfilled."

The Roman eagle is supposed to be here denominated the "abomination," because it was an object of idolatrous worship; and historians inform us that Titus pitched his camp within the precincts of the Holy City very unexpectedly. It was at the time of the Jewish passover, when the city was filled with Jews from various parts of the world. These were suddenly enclosed. A careful observation of the narrative will show one or two opportunities for the Christians to escape, according to the warning they had received. Several historians assert, that, in consequence of the warning, the Christians left the city, and went to Pella. on the other side of the Jordan. However this may have been, it is, surely, remarkable, that our Lord should have given them this premonition, that, after the city should be enclosed, there would be no chance to escape, except by an immediate flight.

Josephus fully confirms our Lord's prediction, that "in those days will be affliction, such as hath not been from the beginning of the creation to this time." It is impossible to read the history of the siege without sensations of pity and of horror. The famine was so distressing as to overpower the feelings of humanity and natural affection. Mothers were seen snatching the food from the mouths of their chil-

dren, while their babes withered in their arms; the dead lay heaped on the ground; unnatural barbarities, too shocking to be related, became common. How pertinent, then, as well as pathetic, was the language of the Messiah to the daughters of Jerusalem: "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold! the days are coming, in which they will say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs which never bare, and the breasts which never gave suck." The history of the times, as given by the Roman, as well as by Jewish writers, is an unforced comment on every word of our Savior's prophecy.

The siege of Jerusalem lasted only five months. But, from the immense strength of the place, and the desperation of the inhabitants, it was expected to sustain a much longer resistance. According to the testimony of Roman historians, nearly a million of Jews perished within the walls; and Josephus supposed a still greater number.

Titus, the Roman general, after the conquest of the city, exclaimed: "We have fought with the assistance of God; it was God, who drove the Jews out of these fortifications; for what could the hand of man effect against such works?" *

Our Savior had said, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." The providential circumstances, which seem to have shortened the time of the siege, were such as these, — the intestine divisions among the Jews, the wanton destruction of provisions by the opposite factions, and the vast number of foreign Jews, who had come to Jerusalem to attend the

* Josephus, Jewish War, Book vi. ch. ix. § 1.

passover. As the multitude of foreign Jews augmented the number inclosed within the walls of the city, they also increased the famine and the pestilence.

Our Lord also had said, "They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations." The truth of this prediction and its accomplishment we have no occasion to prove, by quoting authorities. Our Savior added, "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled." In agreement with this prediction, Jerusalem has been subject to the Romans, the Saracens, the Egyptians, the Mamelukes, the Franks, and the Turks. The Jews have never possessed it, and they still remain distinct, and dispersed among all nations. It is also never to be forgotten, that, contrary to the usual practice of the Romans, and to the will of Titus, who made exertions to preserve it, the city was entirely destroyed. They dug up the walls, they ploughed up the foundations of the temple; and the only monuments left of the metropolis were some towers, which were suffered to stand, as proof of the impregnable nature of the works, and the courage of the besiegers. "For," said our Lord, "thine enemies shall lay thee even with the ground, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another.—Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

The destruction of Jerusalem took place thirty-seven years after the crucifixion of our Savior. This accords with his prediction: "Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Although he limited the time to that generation, he did not foretell precisely the day or the year:

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." The precise day had not then been revealed to him; but the event was to take place while some of that generation should be living. The uncertainty as to the day or the year was a strong argument for vigilance on the part of the disciples; and hence the propriety of the reiterated injunctions, to watch, to pray, and to be always ready.

The circumstances, which have been mentioned, are not even the larger part of those which might be enumerated, and confirmed by undisputed histories. But, on a careful review of those which have been mentioned, who will not be ready to exclaim, "O Lord, how unsearchable are thy judgments, and thy ways past finding out! Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?"

But some unbeliever may ask, What is your authority for believing the minute fulfilment of these extraordinary predictions? We answer, that we have the same kind of evidence, in support of the facts which have been stated, that we have for believing that there was such a city as Jerusalem, and that this city was destroyed, — the testimony of reputable historians. Read the history of Josephus, then lay your hand upon your heart and say, whether any facts can be better substantiated. Josephus was a Jew, but not a Christian. He wrote his history of the conquest of Jerusalem, not under prepossessions in favor of Christianity, and was, probably, ignorant of the predictions of our Savior. He was an eyewitness of the calamities which befell his nation; and, while he records them, he attempts to account for their unparalleled greatness by describing the wickedness of the people. His history is confirmed by the public

register to which he confidently appeals; by the testimony of Vespasian, to whom his book was presented; and it has all the marks of authenticity, which any narrative can be supposed to exhibit. But, even if the history of Josephus had not come down to us, the Roman historians would have been sufficient to have confirmed the essential parts of the prediction. It is, perhaps, not too much to say, that there is no other portion of ancient history more circumstantially, minutely, and faithfully transmitted to us, than that of the Jewish war predicted by the Messiah. Is there no providence in this?

Will any objector ask, Might not the prediction have been written after the event? We answer, on as good ground as you believe that Jerusalem was destroyed when it was, or that it was destroyed at all, you may believe that the prediction preceded the event. The question, in short, comes to this, Is anything recorded in ancient history worthy of being credited?

I ask then, whether you believe that those books of the New Testament, called the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, were written by the men whose names they bear. If you say you do not, I must ask the reason. Why are they not as likely to be genuine as the history of Tacitus, or any other writer of that age? Till some answer can be given to this question, may it not be taken for granted, that the books were written by the reputed authors, and before the destruction of Jerusalem? Matthew was one of the twelve apostles, and there is abundant evidence that all the apostles died before Jerusalem was destroyed, except John; and it is truly remarkable, that the only apostle, who could have forged the prediction after the event, has not recorded it at all.

It may also be observed, that, in the Epistles contained in the New Testament, there are plain allusions or references to such an event, as approaching. It seems to have been a thing generally expected by the Christians. Were, then, these Epistles written after the destruction of Jerusalem? If not, whence did the writers, or the Christians in general, derive the idea of the tremendous calamities which were at hand? Need it be repeated, that the whole voice of antiquity, respecting the Epistles, concurs in assigning them a date prior to the ruin of Jerusalem? Need the unbeliever be challenged to point out a single word, clause, or passage in the Gospels, from which it can be reasonably inferred, that they were written after the predicted events took place? Had they been written subsequently to the events, would there not, probably, have been some specification of names and dates? Is there anything in the complexion of these historians, from beginning to end, which has even the appearance of cunning or imposture, or of anything but unrivalled simplicity?

Once more; suppose the prophecy to have been fabricated after the event. By whom was it done? It must, surely, have been done by a Christian. But in it there are admonitions of Christ to his disciples, to save themselves by flight. The Christians, when the siege approached, either did make their escape, or they did not. If they did, they must have had the prophecy among them; for the event was sudden and unexpected to the nation. If the Christians did not make their escape, let me ask, would any intelligent Christian, in writing for Christians a history of their Master, have been so absurd as to insert admonitions, as delivered by him to them, of which they had made no use, when the occasion occurred? Would he have fabricated

these admonitions, when facts had already proved that those, who were most concerned to know and regard them, were either ignorant of them, or had treated them with neglect?

Having given a detail of the fulfilment of the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, some reflections may be proper on the prophecy itself, and on the principal event foretold.

First, this prophecy was not a loose and general prediction, such as a man of extraordinary foresight might have made, upon observing the character of the Jews, and the situation of Judea. It is too explicit and circumstantial to allow us to suppose that it was no more than a fortunate conjecture. Who, but God himself, or one endowed by him, would dare to pronounce upon the fate of a nation in such unqualified and irrevocable terms; and not only so, but to declare that the generation then living should not have passed away, till all these things should be accomplished? Even if no circumstances of the calamity had been pointed out, the mere intimation of the total overthrow of the Mosaic economy, with all its splendor, antiquity, and veneration, could not have been imagined by an ordinary Jew; much less, that their temple, towards which they worshipped from all quarters of the globe, that temple where God himself was supposed to reside, should be laid level with the ground. This was a conception which a Jew dared not entertain, an event which he would not have dared to predict.

But our Savior predicted events of this improbable character; and he impressed the expectation of them so forcibly on the minds of his disciples that they were prepared to expect the catastrophe. Hence we find, in the

Epistles of the New Testament, expressions unquestionably referring to this extraordinary expectation.

Secondly. If we consider the importance of this event to the cause of Christianity, we shall cease to wonder that it was made the subject of so solemn a prediction. The first Christians were Jews; and in every place, where converts were made, some of them were of Jewish origin. Notwithstanding their reception of Jesus as the Messiah, they retained a strong attachment to the Mosaic rituals, and to the seat of their forefathers' worship. Hence, it is natural to suppose, our Savior's prediction and its accomplishment must have deeply interested the feelings of the Christian Jews at an early period. But the event was of great importance to the establishment of Christianity. It was the Jewish power that persecuted Christianity from its cradle, and nothing but the supernatural guardianship of Heaven prevented its being strangled at its birth. During the existence of the Jews as a nation, or while their ecclesiastical power was in exercise, they were, in every place, the inveterate enemies of the gospel. But, when Jerusalem was overthrown, Christianity may be said to have erected its head in the world.

Thirdly. The prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem was of great importance in establishing our Savior's claims as the Messiah. The event was often mentioned by him as "the coming" or appearance, "of the Son of man," and the fulfilment was an event by which it was to be known that he was, indeed, "the Christ of God." The great cause why the Jews rejected him was, that he did not appear in pomp as a temporal prince, according to the expectations they had formed of the Messiah that God had promised. Instead of appearing as a mighty warrior, he was meek and

lowly. All his encomiums were bestowed on qualities of mind, the reverse of those which the Jews expected to see exemplified in their Deliverer. They could not understand him, when he intimated the sufferings which awaited himself, or them. When he went so far as to predict the utter demolition of their ecclesiastical polity, and the ruin of their temple, nothing more was wanting to satisfy them that he was either a madman or a blasphemer. On the truth of his predictions, therefore, the justice of his claims seem, in a great measure, to have rested. If the events took place according to his word, his claims as the Messiah were established. This, then, was the triumph of Christianity. It was an appeal to fact, which was not to be resisted. The prediction has been fulfilled; God has vindicated the cause and the claims of his Son.

Fourthly. The destruction of Jerusalem, and the present situation of the Jews, are circumstances of unspeakable importance in establishing the general truth of the Christian religion. If the Messiah, who was predicted in the Old Testament, has not appeared, how is it possible, that one should ever arise to answer the description of the prophets? From the time of their dispersion, their scattered families were mingled, and their genealogies lost. The race of David, from which the Messiah was to spring, is as undistinguishable as any other race. Even their tribes are confounded, and the glory of Judah has perished with the rest. The expected Prince was suddenly to appear in his temple; but the temple is now no more. If, then, the Messiah is yet to come, how is he to be known?

The present circumstances of the Jews, all over the world, which have continued eighteen hundred years, circumstances so peculiar and unparalleled, seem to indicate

some great transgression, the effects, if not the guilt, of which are not wiped away. Compare their situation with that of any other people, and you find no parallel. They seem to be reserved to confirm the very gospel which they rejected, to testify to facts to which they would not listen, to keep uncorrupted those very prophecies which foretold their present fate, and to bear eternal witness to their authenticity.

What, then, was the great crime of this unhappy people? The sufferings of that generation, among whom our Savior appeared, would seem a fable in history, were they not so circumstantially related. Everything in the history of the Jews points to a singular providence; a desolation has come upon them, which has no example, and which yet has no limits. Wretched people! What has been your crime? The traveller, as he wanders over Palestine, and calls your history to remembrance, is lost in wonder, till he ascends the hill, where the Lord of glory was crucified by your fathers, the image of the cross bursts upon fancy, and that fearful exclamation occurs to his mind, "His blood be on us, and on our children!" and thus the mystery is resolved, the judgments of Jehovah are vindicated.

From the fearful fate of a nation once so mighty, let us learn to bow down before that Providence which directs the destiny of empires. What has often been may again be; and there is not a man on earth, who is uninterested in the fate of the nation to which he belongs. If the Jews were punished for their treatment of a Savior in whom they did not believe, what have those to expect who profess to believe in him, and still live in disobedience to his commands?

THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND BENEVOLENCE OF THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS.

THE earliest Christians seem to have been bound together by ties stronger than any before known; and to have exhibited a model of union, affection, faith, and zeal, which has justly excited the admiration of subsequent ages.

It has been the unadvised practice of too many of the advocates for Christianity, to represent in too humiliating a manner the circumstances of the first converts, to enhance, as they have imagined, the impediments, which existed, to the first reception of this divine religion. It appears not to be true, either that all the disciples of our Lord, or that all the first converts of his apostles, were men of illiterate minds, or indigent circumstances. Had they been all illiterate, the history of our Savior would not have been written with such unaffected simplicity of language, and, in some cases, such purity and elegance. And I think it is clear, that some of the earliest followers of our Lord were by no means dependent on the charity of others.

James and John left their ship and their hired servants, when they began to follow Jesus. Peter had a house at Capernaum, where our Savior sometimes dwelt; and he, with his brother Andrew, said to Jesus, "We have left all and followed thee;" which implies that he and the other apostles, in whose name they spoke, had something to leave.

It is said, that John was a relation of Caiaphas, the high priest; and our Savior, when he was on the cross, committed his mother to the care of John, and he took her to his own home. It is hence natural, to conclude that he was able to provide for her.

Matthew was called to be a disciple of Jesus, when "sitting at the receipt of custom;" that is, as we should say, in the collector's office. We may well suppose that this was not entirely unprofitable, as we are told, soon afterwards, by Luke, that he made a great feast, to which Jesus and his companions were invited, as well as Matthew's acquaintance and his brethren in office. But, whatever may be supposed to have been the worldly circumstances of Jesus and his disciples, he did not suffer his little company to forget the poor. They had a common stock for these and other purposes; yet, to show how little they depended on this for their support, it was committed to the care of Judas, who seems to have been in the habit of purloining from this little treasure of our Savior's beneficence.

If we consider the situation of other followers of Jesus, we find that Mary Magdalene was able to minister to him of her substance; and, if we may judge from the quantity of spices which were prepared by his followers to embalm his dead body, they could not have been in very indigent circumstances.

Mary, the sister of Lazarus, was so profuse in the use of the precious ointment which she poured on the head of Jesus, just before his death, as to excite the murmurs of bystanders. Joseph of Arimathea, who begged the body of our Lord, was a rich man, and Jesus was buried in his sepulchre. And the invitations, which our Savior received, to the tables of the rich Pharisees, prove that

neither he nor his disciples could have been regarded in a contemptible light, on account of extreme dependence and want.

We find, also, that, after the first effusion of the Spirit, a prodigious number of converts were made, consisting of Jews from all parts of the world, who had come to Jerusalem to worship. The picture, we have of them, represents them as united in affection, and profuse in their liberality. So great was their number that they, probably, found it necessary to divide into smaller societies for worship and communion. The apostles, we are told, were in the habit of "breaking bread from house to house," that is, as I conceive, the different houses, where they met for worship. They are described as united together in the purest affection, and animated by the most unbounded generosity. Though, in such a number of converts, there must have been men from all ranks of life, yet we are told, that none of them lacked. "For as many as were possessors of houses, or lands, sold them; neither said any of them that aught of the things, which he possessed, was his own; but they had all things common; and distribution was made unto every man, according as he had need."

It has been supposed, that, in this primitive circle of converts at Jerusalem, there was a literal community of goods, and that their whole wealth was thrown into a common stock, and placed at the disposal of the apostles; and that this was not a mere voluntary act, but expected, as a thing of course, from all the converts on their professing Christianity. If this were the fact, it is a little extraordinary, that this state of things did not longer continue, that we have no traces of it in the subsequent history, and that it was not imitated in some of the other churches, which

the apostles afterwards planted. But there are some circumstances in this very history of the Acts, which may lead us, perhaps, to a different conclusion.

That this community of goods was merely the result of spontaneous and ardent generosity, and not of any law of the society founded by the apostles, is, I think, to be clearly inferred from the story of Ananias. He was one of the new converts, and, agreeably to the prevailing example, had sold his possessions: but, instead of faithfully acknowledging the amount of the money which he had received, he attempted to deceive the apostles, and to keep back part of the price; and, by offering a part for the whole, he hoped to retain his standing as a member of the society of Christians, and to be maintained out of the common stock. The consequence of this prevarication, which is called lying to the Holy Spirit, is well known. The language of Peter, on this occasion, is worthy of remark: "Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie unto the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whilst it remained, was it not thy own? And, after it was sold, was it not in thy power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God;" that is, "you have attempted to deceive the Spirit with which we are miraculously endowed." This extraordinary story, I think, proves there was no law binding the early converts to give up their estates to the public service; and that Ananias, under the pretence of generosity, had indulged a fraudulent, vain, and, perhaps, covetous design. His crime was not sacrilege, as some have supposed; he had made no vow to throw his possessions into a common stock, or, in other words, to devote them to God; but it was gross hypocrisy and prevarication. It was a pretence, that he

had bestowed upon the church the whole price of his land, when he was conscious that he had detained a part of it. It appears, I think, that the severity of this early miracle was necessary, in the infant state of Christianity, to prevent any persons from joining the new community from sinister views and worldly purposes, with the hope of obtaining a share of the distributions which were made. It is said to have struck terror into them all; it must have satisfied them that all fraud might be instantly detected; that none but the sincere and upright should dare to profess themselves converts to a cause which appeared to be under the immediate protection of the Searcher *of hearts*. And it also illustrates, in the most singular manner, the pure, unaided propagation and success of Christianity, from conviction unfeigned and motives uncorrupted.

But it may be replied, Is it not said, that the first converts had all things in common? Yes; but it would seem, that this expression ought to be explained by other clauses. "They had all things in common." Why? not because they were under any moral or positive obligation to relinquish their estates; but because "the multitude, of them who believed, were of one heart and one soul."—"Neither was there any among them that lacked." Why? because they did not consider that aught of the things, which they possessed, was their own. They were animated with a fervor of generosity, and a strong faith in that religion which taught them to look to another world for their recompense. They felt, what they had never felt before, that there were ties stronger than those of interest or consanguinity; in short, they gave an early and a most illustrious example of the disinterested spirit of Christianity. The poor, whom they had before disregarded and despised, they now con-

sidered as heirs of the same hopes with themselves, brethren of the same generous Master, and entitled to all the relief and consolation which their rich fellow-Christians could give them.

This spirit continued, in an eminent degree, in the Christian church. The history of the Acts, and Paul's Epistles, furnish many other instances of the character of the first Christian communities. The whole world seemed to them but one family; and this primitive church of Jesus, which had set the example of Christian generosity, was afterwards indebted to the distant churches for relief, when they themselves were suffering under calamity. From distant provinces of Macedonia and Achaia contributions were sent to "the poor saints at Jerusalem;" and Paul seems to have been delighted with being engaged in this charitable service, and commends his distant converts for their readiness. Consider now that this generosity was shown from Gentiles towards Jews, whom, before the introduction of Christianity, the Jews thought unworthy of anything but hell; whom they thought it a pollution, to converse with; it was shown, too, at a time, when controversies existed in the Christian community about some points of ceremony between Jew and Gentile, which, though to us they now appear trivial, seemed to the early converts of everlasting consequence. Yet, notwithstanding these schisms and occasional jealousies, they did not forget the great duty of charity; this, surely, was a new phenomenon in the world. Perhaps it cannot be shown in the whole history of paganism, before the introduction of the gospel, that a number of poor societies or individuals in Greece or Italy were interested in the distresses of a community at Jerusalem, and much less, that they ever thought of con-

tributing a sum for the relief of the distressed in such a distant and despised country.

The first reflection to be made upon this holy and unexampled generosity of the first church of Christians in the world is this: how strong must have been their persuasion of the truth of their religion! how powerful must have been the first preaching of the apostles! how irresistible the evidence of their early miracles! How shall we account for the early and prodigious increase of the Christian church, immediately after the death of its Founder and the apparent extinction of its hopes, except on the supposition of the truth of the story, and the perfect disinterestedness of the first preachers of the religion? Was there a class of people in the world, where Christianity was less likely to succeed than at Jerusalem? Where could the first prejudices against Christianity be imagined to be stronger, than where the Founder of that religion had been publicly crucified in the sight of the very people who had seen him expiring on the cross in ignominy, — the victim of the ruling powers, the execration of those men whom they had been most accustomed to reverence, and to whose authority, especially in matters of religion, they had been taught implicitly to submit? Yet a few preachers, such as Peter and John, men of common life and no extraordinary talents, not only collect, in a very short time, a community of several thousands of professors, who acknowledge the truth of the miraculous resurrection of Jesus, and gave their names to his cause; but of men of all ranks in life, rich, as well as poor, all animated by one spirit of faith and charity; men who sold their possessions, and contributed their fortunes to the relief of those whom they had, probably, never before known; men who could have no com-

mon bond but this new and most extraordinary belief in the resurrection of a despised Master, — a Master whom his earliest followers had joined with the hope of some temporal advantage; men, in fact, whose hopes had all been blasted by the crucifixion of their Leader. Yet we find them rising up, like a new creation, in the midst of Jerusalem, with principles, feelings, and habits, more like heaven than earth; ready to sacrifice life, fortune, and reputation, for the support of one another and their common faith; without any object on earth to allure them, without any hope of recompense, but in the promises of a crucified Savior, and in the visible protection of a God who seems to have taken them under his peculiar patronage.

Surely, this is a state of things, for which nothing will account, but their firm persuasion of the truth of the resurrection of their Master. But, if he was yet dead, whence this astonishing, this unaccountable persuasion? Did God interpose to infatuate the minds of these men, in the belief of a palpable falsehood? or do you suppose the world of wicked spirits was, for a time, let loose to take possession of the minds of thousands of people, and transform them into new, pious, and disinterested creatures? Certainly not. Nothing more is necessary to account for it than their knowledge of the facts of which they were witnesses, and their certainty of the miraculous powers with which the apostles were endued. New views were opened to their minds, which they had not before received; and they possessed a faith before which every peril or temptation, threatening or allurement, vanished into air, and left them in full view of a heavenly world, an everlasting inheritance for the righteous.

A second reflection on the generosity of this primitive

church is, that it was an early, fair, and important exhibition of the generous spirit of Christianity, and the kind of value, which our religion allows us to affix to our worldly possessions. We do not say that this generosity was perfectly unexampled in the world; but this we may say, it was the very spirit and essence of Christianity.

The precepts and the spirit of Christianity are altogether generous, and hostile to the avarice of possessions. Not only does it forbid every species of injustice, but warns us against an ardent pursuit of these perishable goods. And from what considerations? Truly, because we "cannot serve God and mammon," "and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, enter in and choke the word," and no fruit is brought to perfection; because the solicitude of acquiring and preserving wealth is always attended with a thrall and torment which impair and corrupt the very satisfactions expected from its possession, and "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof;" because, in fine, those things, which nature demands, are few, easily acquired, and unexpensive, for "godliness, with contentment, is great gain; we brought nothing into this world, and, it is certain, we can carry nothing out." Such is the language of the gospel on the subject of the pursuit of wealth.

With respect to its possession and use, its language is also as perfectly temperate and rational. It does not send us to the sea, like some of the ancient philosophers, to throw our wealth into the waves; nor does it require us to hoard or to lavish the abundance with which we may be favored; but we are commanded to minister to the necessities of others; to give to him that asketh of us, and from him, who would borrow of us, not to turn away, — as it

becomes those who believe themselves not the lords of these possessions, but the stewards of Him who gives them all things richly to enjoy ; for, according to our religion, a well bestowed benefit is a treasure of hope, which thieves cannot plunder, nor misfortunes diminish, nor moth nor rust corrupt. In our acts of charity Christianity requires undissembled good-will. It teaches us that the hope of recompense or reputation corrupts our bounty ; that its acceptableness with God is lost, when these interested motives mingle with the act. To encourage us to the most disinterested and generous kindness, it promises a special care of those who observe these laws of benevolence. It leaves to Christians none of those excuses, which we are ready to make, for neglect of duty ; but, on the contrary, points to the ravens which are fed, and the lilies which are clothed, by a kind Providence that knoweth we have need of all these things.

Such is the language of our religion on the subject of wealth. And did not these primitive Christians understand their religion ? Did they not show the power of it more effectually by their generosity and their mutual affection than the most solemn and reiterated professions could have done ?

What remains, then, but to show ourselves worthy of this primitive community, this parent stock of Christians ? Let it not be suspected, that, after eighteen centuries, we understand less of the spirit of our religion than the poor Jews of Jerusalem ; or that we have less confidence in our Christianity than the first converts. If the circumstances of our times do not require the same provision, by a common stock, for the poor, yet our religion demands the same

spirit, and our faith can be as well proved by the nature of our generosity, though it may not be so publicly exhibited.

If I were to enter into the reasons for munificence, I might suggest to the rich that many are now struggling with poverty and distress, who are more deserving of God's favors than themselves. I might ask, whether we can enjoy with any satisfaction that superabundance which we might easily spare for the relief of those who really need it. I might ask, whether our wealth has not already led us into luxury, sensuality, pride, and hard-heartedness; and whether we can better check this tendency, or better make amends for our past defects, than by consecrating a larger portion than ever to the relief of the poor. I might go still further, and ask, whether we are all entirely satisfied with the means, or the spirit, by which we have risen to our present affluence; and, if not, how shall we better repair these mistakes, or atone for our rapacity, than by distributing to the wants of God's poor children?

GOD OMNIPRESENT.

"THOU God seest me" is a doctrine strictly practical, a plain proposition, not to be obscured by explanation, or perverted by ingenuity. It is, also, a truth which we cannot be puzzled to apply. To the good man it is a truth pregnant with consolation. He, who can look up to God as a Father, and on whom God can look down as upon a son, rejoices that "his path and his lying down" are compassed with the infinite knowledge of his God. Hence all about him is open and serene. He seems to enjoy the perpetual company of Omniscience. To him solitude brings no weariness or terror; nor does the business of life so engross or dissipate his thoughts that he cannot recur instantly to the recollection of an omnipresent Being. To him every spot is consecrated ground; for God is there. In the darkness of the night his path is illumined by the presence of God. In the stillness of the evening he feels the all-surrounding influence of Divine power. When he mixes with the throng in the business of the world, an eye, which cannot be eluded, seems to pierce into his employments; a hand, which cannot be entangled, unravels all his motions, and lays open his progress. The integrity of such a man is sure and unimpeachable. You may build upon it as upon a rock of granite. His conversation is that of one talking upon oath; "his witness is in heaven, his record is on high."

Who can describe the consolation which is found in being able to appeal from the false and cruel judgments of men to the decisions of Him who knoweth all things; to fly from the peltings of calumny, and shelter one's self "in the secret place of the Most High;" to escape from the suspicions and treacheries of man, and lean upon the unfailing promises of God; to seek relief from the false opinions of those we love, by pouring out, at the feet of an impartial God, the secrets of the soul, crying, like Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee?" On the other hand, when the wicked attempt to flee from the observation of Omniscience, how vain is the attempt! Follow the guilty man in his restless wanderings. See him plunging into the crowd and bustle of the world, as if he thought he might be unobserved in the confusion; but in vain; an eye seems to follow him, and to mark him out from among the throng. He resolves to seek for rest by removing from the scenes of guilt and remorse. He takes "the wings of the morning," and flies to "the uttermost parts of the sea;" but he finds evidence that God was there before him. Is there no one of the innumerable worlds out of the reach of an offended God? The guilty wretch tries the experiment. He rushes, O God, out of this world, makes his bed in hell, awakes, and "behold, thou art there!"

An indescribable interest is thrown over the doctrine of the omniscience and omnipresence of God, when considered in connexion with the judgment which is to follow. He, who now observes every determination we form, will be himself our Judge. Every moment is the testimony taking under the eye of Heaven, which is to acquit or condemn us hereafter. Nothing less than omniscience, perpetually

exercised, is capable of deciding upon such mixed characters as ours, and of assigning to the infinite multitude of moral agents unchangeable places of abode, without confusion and without injustice.

To the man, who believes in the constant presence and superintendence of the Deity, nothing is uninteresting. All history is a roll, inscribed with the name of God. When he sees how unexpectedly and how easily events rise out of events, how intimately everything is connected with all other things by innumerable links and dependencies, when the counsels of the prudent are perplexed, and the predictions of the discerning are falsified, how inestimable to such a man is the assurance, that there is one Being, to whom all this is plain, who discerns the end from the beginning, who explores the future with greater ease than we read the past, and who not only comprehends, in his instantaneous survey, the grand events of every period, but is concerned in every motion, however inconsiderable, in the system of nature!

It is difficult to conceive how the sentiment of supreme love to God can be maintained with that intensity which the language of Scripture requires, except in the mind of one who is accustomed to view God in everything, to see, and hear, and feel his presence as habitually as he perceives by his senses the objects which surround him. In this manner, whatever attachments such a man may feel to his friends, his children, his country, or his favorite pursuits, the idea of God, as the Author of all he enjoys, is so inseparably connected and completely mingled with all his thoughts, that, in loving them, he loves their Author; and every separate affection unites and coalesces in the

all-embracing idea and sentiment of affection towards God, everywhere present and doing good. This is the summit of Christian excellence, the perfection of Christian piety.

THE CHOICE AND SERVICE OF RELIGION.

"Choose you, this day, whom ye will serve."
JOSHUA XXIV. 15.

THE words of Joshua now before us suggest several important ideas.

In the first place, they teach us that religion is a subject of choice. We are not born religious, nor are we made so by education, or the mere care and labors of parents or instructers, without our consent and earnest coöperation. Religion requires our determination, our voluntary choice; and it is, also, the most solemn question on which we can be called to decide.

To what purpose are all the exhortations of ministers, the prayers of God's people, and the expostulations of the gospel, if we will not be persuaded to choose and seriously act for ourselves? Let us, then, bring ourselves to the test of serious examination, whether we have, in very deed, chosen a life of real religion.

Some, perhaps, will say for themselves, "We have regularly attended God's worship; we have been trained up to walk circumspectly, to avoid impiety, impurity, dishonesty, and falsehood; we have set a good example, and have not deliberately brought disgrace on religious institutions." But it may be asked, Why have you done these things? Has it been from a principle of duty, a sense of obligation, and from love to God? Or has it been from a thousand various

motives which you have never examined? If the latter, you have yet to choose whom you will serve.

As religion is a subject of choice, it is not a thing to be forced upon us either by God or man. Nor are we to wait in a state of indifference and indecision, expecting miraculous agency to turn us from a course of sin to the service of God. If we speak it with reverence, we may truly say that even Omnipotence cannot effect the conversion of a sinner without his consent. For conversion implies the consent and choice of the mind to serve the Lord.

Choosing religion, or the service of God, implies more than a consent to be of this or that party among professed Christians, and more than the adoption of any human system of doctrines or opinions. It consists, rather, in a serious determination of the mind to devote ourselves to the honest study and practice of God's will. Without this we shall be exposed to pass through life in a state of delusion, to confound our zeal for a sect with zeal for the truth, our attachment to those who bear the same insignia with ourselves with love for our neighbor, and our choice of a party with devotedness to God.

In the second place, we are to remark, that, in choosing religion, we make choice of some object to serve. "Choose you whom ye will serve." The majority of mankind are the slaves of some ruling passion, from which their whole life takes its direction. The passions, which hold the world in bondage, may be reduced to a few great tyrants, — the love of pleasure, of power, of money, of fame. "Know ye not," says the Apostle, "that, to whomsoever ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

Do any plead for themselves thus: "We have been always devoted to the service of God; our parents dedicated us to him in our infancy; and we have yielded to the authority of his law"?

Let this profession be examined. How are you affected by the opinion of the world? What are the vices which you abhor? Do you abhor all the vices which God's law forbids, or only those which happen to be censured by the indulgent moralists of the age? Do you abhor all impurity, profaneness, dissoluteness, revenge, worldliness, and irreligion? Dare you, in the face of reproach, contempt, and ignominy, refuse to yield to the favorite opinions of those who call themselves the world? Are you so much superior to their condemnation that you dare to forgive a man who has insulted you? Dare you let the world know that you fear God and not reproach, hell and not the contempt of the wicked? Can we be the servants of God, and yet the slaves of the world's law? Can we be the servants of God, and yet ashamed to avow our religious principles, and to practise according to his requirements?

Do we pretend to serve God, while we are buried in avarice, and while we devote our days and nights to the service of mammon or wealth? If the love of wealth engrosses our pursuits and narrows our benevolence, if it quenches our sympathy for others and closes our hearts against their distresses and wants, if it makes us hard in our dealings and punctilious in our demands, if it renders us more sensible to wrongs done to ourselves than to sins against our heavenly Father, then are we the slaves of wealth, rather than servants of God.

There are many, who are the slaves of sensuality, who, perhaps, do not feel their own bondage. How sure, and

yet how secret, is the progress of intemperance! How is the whole mind often subjected, and the faculties exhausted, by this vice, before the poor slave is aware of his danger! He is a slave of sensuality, who, for the sake of its pleasures, neglects the improvement of his mind, or incapacitates himself for the discharge of his duties, or for the enjoyment of the sweets of religion.

Let those, who have hitherto preferred the service of the world to the service of God, and who imagine that religion is a burden, and the service of God a restraint, believe the voice of all experience, that there is no master so severe as the world, and no service more unprofitable than that which they have chosen. There is no end to the sacrifices which must be made, to conform to the capricious laws of custom and popularity. After all that is made in this life, there must be a dreadful sacrifice, when death closes the state of probation. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

THE PRACTICAL ATHEIST AND THE DEVOUT MAN CONTRASTED.

THE practical atheists are far more numerous than the speculative. By practical atheists I mean those men who are wholly engrossed in providing for their present comfort, wealth, fame, power, or sensual satisfactions. They live precisely as they might do with a belief that God, and Christianity, and a future state are mere nonentities, or as if they had only to provide, like a superior order of brutes, for a comfortable existence on earth.

The idea of God may, indeed, at some times, enter into their minds. They hear of him as they would of some invisible energy of nature, and have little more practical relation to him than they have to the principle of gravitation. He is not associated with their private thoughts, nor do they regard him as a Being whom it is important to please in all their actions. They are creatures only of the habits which they have happened to form by circumstances, into which they have happened to be thrown; and by these they are unconsciously impelled, without admitting the idea of a supreme Controller to disturb their worldly progress. In short, the practical atheist is the man who hears of God with indifference; who thinks all fear of him a chimera to frighten weak minds, all love of him an enthusiastic passion; and with whose pursuits all religious habits, conversation, ordinances, and meditations, are uncongenial. If he appears to live and die an honest man, it is not be-

cause he wishes to approve himself to God, but because it is the best policy in business, or most reputable in society.

Between this character and that of a thoroughly devout man are almost as many shades of difference as there are between the darkness of midnight and the brightness of noonday. Some men can never entirely forget the impressions of youth, the instructions of their catechisms, their infant prayers, and their childish notions. The idea of God returns to them, upon extraordinary occasions, to excite some feelings of awe or religious restraint. Some have intervals of consideration, when they perform a few actions with express reference to God's knowledge and observation. Others reserve all their consideration of God for those seasons, when they go up, with others, to the temple, to pay a customary homage; and think the ideas, which they cannot then avoid admitting, quite sufficient for the purpose of life. They go away, perhaps, with resolutions of amendment, which pleasure or business soon drives from their minds; and they wait, till the first day of the next week comes round to throw the idea of God again into their minds.

Many are awakened to think of God by some unusual calamity. For a while they stand aghast. But the tremendous voice of admonition soon, perhaps, dies away, and the din of the world drowns their serious meditations. Others admit the idea of God so far as to keep up certain formalities which they think agreeable to him. In the hearts of some persons more piety exists than appears to men in external acts. In others the outward appearances of religion are more promising than the state of their hearts really confirms.

The character of the man of habitual devotion is far

superior to any of the varieties which have been described. He is accustomed to see God in everything. Not an object arrests his attention, or interests his hopes or his fears, but he descries the agency of God. All the beauty, grandeur, wisdom, complex uses, structure, and operations of the material world give him hints of Omnipotence. The calm and soothing serenity of the sky impresses him with the mild character of the Deity. The happiness of the inferior creation invites him to rejoice in the Dispenser of so much life and alacrity. The tremendous changes of the elements, thunder, whirlwinds, earthquakes, eruptions, seem the mightier movements of irresistible Power. The various adaptation of means to ends, the complex structure of animal bodies, their growth, progress, tendencies, and distinctions, fill him with unaffected admiration of the supreme Intelligence.

But the peculiar characteristic of a man of piety is, that he looks upon God in the character of a Parent. Events, as they occur, are considered by him as arising under the direction of parental wisdom. In his own life he acknowledges the moderating hand of an omnipotent, heavenly Father. He is convinced that nothing of evil befalls him, but under the direction of one who is able to make "all things work together for good to them that love him." He feels that he is a creature, in the hands of a Being who has destined him to live forever, and that nothing in creation can snatch him out of the hands of this gracious God. He never feels so happy as when he has the most intimate communication with his heavenly Friend; and the sense of his dependence, so far from being irksome, is, in truth, one of the most soothing sentiments which he can entertain. The consciousness of having aimed to please his greatest

and best Friend is a recompense for anything which he may have unmeritedly suffered from erring mortals. No important event occurs to him without leading his thoughts to God. Sickness, pain, reverses, disappointments, bereavements, and joys are all associated in his mind with God as the Disposer of all things.

He looks upon his children as God's children, his family as a part of God's family. He makes no friends, allows himself in no pleasures, engages in no pursuits, encumbers himself with no cares, without considering whether God looks down with complacency. He is never alone, never destitute, never insensible of his dependence. The idea of God accompanies him in his pleasures, in his business, as well as in his devotional exercises. Acts of devotion are congenial to the state of his feelings, for God is in all his thoughts.

FAMILY RELIGION.

It is not to be concealed, that the salutary discipline of domestic government, the great business of religious education, and, above all, the reasonable and interesting practice of family worship, have fallen into a degree of disuse, of which it is more easy to conjecture the extent than to counteract the example, more easy to lament the symptoms than to predict the consequences.

Christians, the worship of God in your families is a reasonable service, and may be rendered a most profitable service. These are the two heads of our remarks.

First, then, it is a reasonable service. If there be any who doubt this, their reasons are to me utterly beyond conjecture. It is not easy to imagine any reasons, which can be suggested, in favor of public, congregational worship, which are not equally strong in favor of the worship of families. The same God, whose providence governs communities, presides over the small circles of which communities are composed. It is he, who "setteth the solitary in families." It is he, who has united them in ties more intimate than any which can bind together the members of a large society.

Is it of any consequence, that the public should be impressed with reverence for God and his government? Surely, then, no practice can be indifferent which will make those impressions early, stamp them deeply, and give ideas

of religion an intimate association with the most tender, amiable, and lasting affections of the human heart.

It is not necessary to insist on the authority which the head of a family possesses for this service, and which it is his duty to exercise with fidelity and affection. However much the relaxation of the sentiments of religion, conspiring with other maxims of insubordination, may have enfeebled the authority of parents and masters in this age and under this government, the obligation of those, who are at the head of families, to provide for the religious wants of those who depend on them for support, is still commensurate with the power; for it is the power, which everywhere constitutes the obligation; and I shall refuse to believe that the power is extinct, till some serious attempt to revive and exercise it shall have failed. The father and the master may yet be the priest of his household.

But you ask, Is it not enough, that we observe our private devotions, in which we pray for our families, but must we also pray with them? I might reply by asking, Is it enough, that I give orders for the provision of the day, though I never take a repast with my family? Is it enough, that I secretly wish my children should possess knowledge, which I take no care to communicate; or habits, of which I set not the example; or principles, which I take no pains to enforce? Unless it is first taken for granted, that the practice, which we recommend, is either unnatural, unreasonable, or useless, no man, much less a Christian, can have fulfilled his parental and domestic obligations, while he neglects to make an experiment, at least, of family worship.

Can any one imagine that topics will be wanting, while there are so many subjects of family congratulation and

thanksgiving, so many occasions for acknowledging domestic sins, so many family anxieties and afflictions, wants and mercies, hopes and fears? Is not every occasion, which you are still disposed to acknowledge in public by the notes which you send to be read in the sanctuary, an occasion for domestic gratitude, or supplication, or acknowledgment? Surely, every truly devout sentiment, which you are ready to make the subject of public expression in the house of God, is worthy of being expressed on the spot where it was excited, in the circle where it is most intimately felt; and how many occasions are there, which it would be painful or improper to notice in any other place!

If we look back to the manners of the ancient world, and to the practice of the very heathens themselves, we shall find the rites of family religion everywhere prevailing. It was a dictate of nature to those Gentiles who, "having not the law" of Moses, or any express revelation, were "a law unto themselves." Who can avoid discerning this fact in the frequent mention of the household gods of the pagans? How touching that passage in the Roman poet, where old Anchises is represented escaping from the flames of Troy, and taking in his hand the images of his domestic deities!

> "The good old man, with suppliant hands, implored
> The gods' protection, and their star adored:
> Now, now, my son, no more delay,
> I yield, I follow, where Heaven shows the way:
> Keep, O my country's gods! our dwelling place,
> And guard this relique of the Trojan race,
> This tender child!" ———

What! Shall the images of the heathen world cry out against us; and the voice of nature be preserved only in

the fictions of poetry, and the records of idolatry? Shall the men of Troy "rise up in judgment against this generation, and condemn it?"

Our second assertion was, that it is a profitable practice. If anything can effectually revive and secure the fidelity of parents, the affection of husbands and wives, the moral restraint and early piety of children, the peace of domestic life, the attachment of servants, and the general order of families, it must be the revival of family religion. This must impose a check on the impetuosity of our passions, and give to the conversation of the household a sobriety and purity which nothing else can so effectually secure. It is not easy to believe that profaneness and riot should ever find their way, much less take up their abode, in a house, where the presence of God is, every day, recognised, his protection sought, his bounty acknowledged, his pardon implored.

There is also another consideration, which is by no means of little moment. By the regular reading of the Scriptures in select portions, as introductory to the acts of family devotion, there is given to the young a knowledge of these sacred writings, and a reverence for them, which can be in no other way so early and so easily acquired. If it could, for a moment, be supposed, that the heads of families stood not in need of this instruction, and that they would derive from it no advantage, yet a pious and benevolent regard to our children and domestics ought to render us all willing, punctual, and faithful in the performance of a service which would produce the happiest and most lasting effects.

Yet there are those who, insensible to those moral and spiritual benefits, and looking only at present and visi-

ble advantages, ask, with a most deplorable unconcern, "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" If you think it nothing, then, to have those about you impressed with the fear of God; if you think it a poor consideration, to raise a seed to preserve the sentiments of religion and pure Christianity for succeeding generations; if you think it nothing, that those, who leave your families, to establish families of their own, should carry with them the spirit of prayer, and the faith of the gospel; at least, reflect on the influence which the blessing of God, thus faithfully sought, may have upon your own industry and temporal circumstances, and upon the happiness of domestic life. "The curse of the Lord is in the habitation of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the just."

You complain of the irregularity and perversities of youth, that you have lost the control of your children, and that you cannot correct the evil habits which they have early and unguardedly formed. Do not lament the wickedness of the times, and complain that your children are ruined; but think, what have you done for them? You have neglected to call to your aid, in the government of them, that most powerful of principles, the early fear of God. Could they fail to feel a powerful reverence for the name of God, if they had been daily witnesses of domestic worship? You are shocked with their profaneness; think where they first learned it, and where they might first have been guarded against it. Do you complain of their ingratitude, their irreverence for your advice and correction? Ah! they have not been taught their duty to the Great First Parent! Do you complain of the negligence and unfaithfulness of servants? How should it be otherwise,

when so little care is taken to sanction and enforce, with the sense of religion, the sentiment of fidelity? Where are the domestics who are accustomed to hear, in the families in which they live, these injunctions of the Apostle?—"Servants, be obedient unto your masters, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but, as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good-will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men."

There is, also, another consideration, which powerfully enforces this most interesting duty; and this is, that it will prepare your children and domestics for the public services of the sanctuary. Little benefit, comparatively, can be derived from the instruction which is attempted to be conveyed from the pulpit, if some provision of religious rudiments and of serious impressions has not been made at home. They hear the preacher; but, without anything to guide their thoughts, the services are to them a mere show, which engages their eyes, or sounds, which strike their ears. If they have not been trained up in habits of devotion, accustomed to serious deportment at prayer, and instructed in the Scriptures and the elements of Christianity elsewhere, can you expect them to enter, with pleasure and interest, into the service of the house of God?

I confess, when I look at the awful strides which, from the circumstances in which we have been placed, vice, fraud, and general unprincipledness have made and will continue to make among us, my heart sometimes sinks within me. Where, then, ye patriots, ye lovers of your country, who tremble for her safety, where can a check be placed to this increase of corruption, if it be not placed at home? The force of moral principle can never be pre-

served, or, if lost, restored, but by the aid of religion; and, if the little domestic societies, of which every community is composed, are not first well principled, the day of reformation is removed to an indefinite distance, and the day of evil is not far off. It is in your houses, and not in a larger association, that you can form nurseries of good men and good citizens. These are the fountains into which the salt must be cast; or the streams, which issue from them, will yet flow corrupting and corrupted, and every year will swell this dead sea with new pollution, till it spreads pestilence over our country, and overwhelms the city of our God.

Some, however, who do not feel for their country, may yet feel for themselves. To such I would say, religion is the great business of our lives, and these lives are short and precarious. This is our day, in which we are exhorted to mind the things which belong to our peace, before they are hidden from our eyes forever. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" and this fear will not cease to be our truest wisdom, when the maxims and the fashions of the present age shall have vanished like a dream.

WHY IS DEATH TERRIBLE?

One year has just past, and another is commencing its revolution; and this fair sun will only rise and set a few times, and again a year will have elapsed. And what is this strange and awful consummation, to which the lapse of another year has brought us nearer? What is it, which is included in that little word, death, which thrills the nerves and curdles the blood of thousands and tens of thousands?

In the first place, there is an air of awful uncertainty always surrounding the event. We look forward, and cannot assign it to any particular period. Every instance of mortality, which occurs, tends to enhance the uncertainty. "One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet;" another cometh to the grave mature in years and virtues, or with infirmities and vice drops rotten into the tomb. Yet, though the exact moment, when we shall be summoned hence, can never be ascertained, the certainty of the event itself amounts to a degree of assurance, which no other subject can possibly acquire. But can death be sudden to him who knows that there is nothing more certain than the event, and nothing more uncertain than the time?

Another cause of our dread is to be found in the idea, which is entertained, of the exquisite pangs of dissolution. But who has issued from the chambers of the tomb, who has uttered an audible voice from the coffin, to tell us the

pangs through which he has just been passing? Do we gather this from supposing that what terminates a series of pains and calamities, of sickness and sorrows, must be more painful, more agonizing than any, because it is the last? Those, who have recovered from severe disorders, have passed through, perhaps, worse than the pangs of death without dissolution; and the crisis of any acute complaint is as painful, when it leaves us alive, as when it extinguishes forever our sensibility. It is not, then, pain, which we fear, for martyrdom has seen its thousands encircled in flames, and slowly consumed; but it is death, that comprehensive word, in which so many terrors combine and coalesce.

Another source of our fear of death is to be found, perhaps, in the idea, that it is not only the last event in the series of those acts and feelings which constitute life, but that it is also something peculiarly new and extraordinary. But there is no reason why an event should be encircled with terror merely from its relative position in the order of time, or of number, or of place; and the novelty alone is no more a reason of alarm than it would be to a blind man to dread the sudden recovery of his sight, because it would open to him an utterly new and unimagined train of sensations and ideas.

But we proceed to another and fruitful source of apprehension, — the circumstances and appearances which belong to this dreadful figure of our mortality. Death is mentioned, and instantly there occurs to our imagination a long train of melancholy images, the lifeless and bloodless corpse, the altered features, the dead and sunken eye. Our fancy then flies instantly to the tomb, and finds it cold, and comfortless, and silent, and dark; she sees there the

shroud which wraps the dead, the close imprisoning coffin, and innumerable images offensive and horrible to living curiosity. But these are all terrors of the imagination, to which education and habit have given an ascendancy, but which the understanding may easily surmount, and of which the mind ought to be divested.

I have thus hastily mentioned the principal sources of that inexplicable dread of death, which is almost a universal sentiment. The whole world bows tremblingly at the footstool of this monarch of corporeal existence. We paint his course with darkness; his guards are spectres of despair; his sceptre touches us with cruel dismay; his sway extends not only through the cold realms of forgetfulness, which are his hereditary dominions, but his future subjects close their eyes, alarmed at the imaginary aspect of the monarch, whom they have arrayed in all the appendages of oppressive and melancholy horror.

But whence this paralyzing fear? Indeed, I cannot believe that the circumstances, which I have enumerated, are sufficient, either separately or combined, to produce a feeling which appears to be so instinctive and universal. These explications, the more we examine, appear more unsatisfactory and inadequate. Hence I look around me for some other source of these painful apprehensions, — and I have found it. Ye incredulous idolaters of nature, who would banish a God from creation, as you have banished him from your reasonings, your fears have betrayed you. It is not *dying* which you dread; you tremble lest you should not die. Something whispers that you may live again. Here, here is the spring of anxiety, in the righteous and moral government of a Being who can bring us before his bar, and to whom it as easy to resuscitate as to destroy.

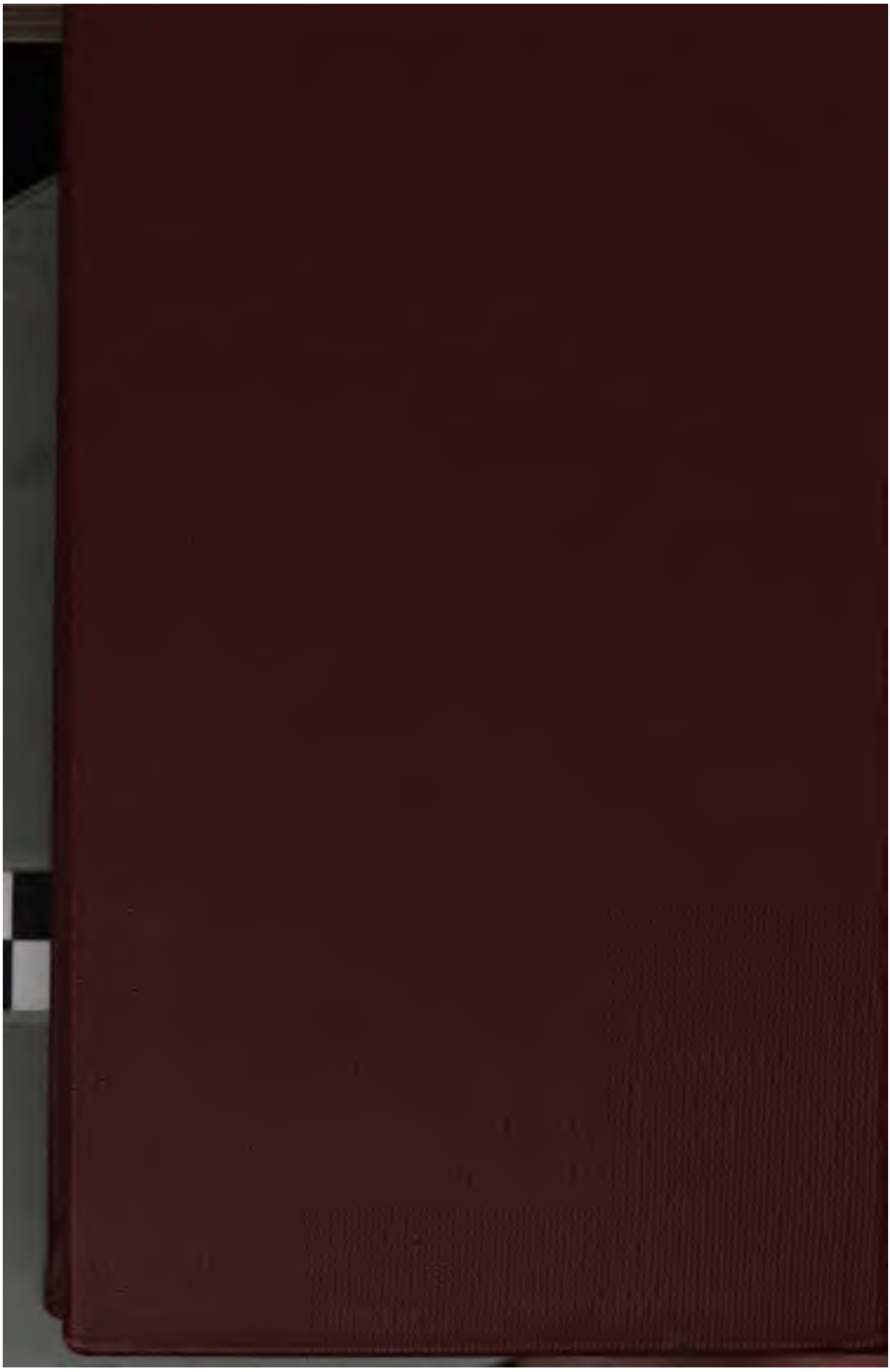
Omnipotence may act; man may live again; and, if alive, he is accountable. Yes, "it is conscience, that makes cowards of us all." It is conscience, that outruns our cool and sophistical reasoning, and, in spite of our instinct, leaps beyond the moment of our dissolution, stops not at the imposing solemnities of funerals and mourning, lingers not about the coffin, the shroud, and the tomb. No, these are not the objects which can detain her. It is conscience, which rushes through those feeble barriers of virtue and sense, and finds herself in an immeasurable eternity, in the midst of which is established forever the throne of Omnipotence, and through which the eye of Omniscience darts like the particles of light. At the bar of this great God conscience unwillingly finds herself. There, drawn up in fearful array, are the deeds done in the body; and the being, that is to answer for them, lives, while the body is mouldering and senseless in the tomb. Let any analyze the sentiment of fear, which death excites, and he will detect little dread of falling into nought. We cannot so shut up the tomb that a gleam of light from the world beyond it will not dart into the darkness. We cannot so oppress the suggestions of conscience under the weight of sophistry, or leaden insensibility, that they will not sometimes burst their confinement, and expatiate in the awful uncertainties of a world to come. Yes, it is this, which has made cowards, on the bed of death, of those acute reasoners, those sublime theorists, those polished geniuses, those monarchs in the realms of art and fancy, who have unhappily chosen the forlorn and obscure system of atheism for their consolation. It was this, which drew from Gibbon, on the death of a dear friend, these memorable words: "All is now lost, finally, irrecoverably lost. Ah, the immortality of

the soul is, at some times, a very comfortable doctrine!" It was this, which dictated the following confessions to the skeptical historian of England: "I am affrighted and confounded with that forlorn solitude in which I am placed by my philosophy. When I turn my eyes inward, I find nothing but doubt and ignorance. Where am I, and what? From what causes do I derive my existence, and to what condition shall I return? I am confounded with these questions, and begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, environed with the deepest darkness." It was this, which peopled with terrors the imagination of the dying Voltaire, when he disburdened his conscience to an attending priest, and which made him confess to his physician the agonies of his mind, and entreat him to procure for his perusal, in his dying hour, a treatise written against the eternity of future punishment.

But for this last and omnipotent cause of terror are there no alleviations provided? Yes! but not from any of the sources which I have hitherto explored. I must lead to that spring which flows fast by the oracle of God. It is my duty and my joy, to open to the anxious and thirsty spirit the wells of consolation, everlasting and ever full. I would lead you to the tomb of Jesus, that you may see the light which breaks from it, and the angels of comfort and mercy, that watch around that consecrated spot. In the light of his gospel the darkness beyond the grave vanishes, fearful uncertainty changes into hope, eternity becomes less indistinct, and, consequently, less oppressive and alarming. Time unites itself indivisibly with the duration beyond it; and the present life, we are sure, is but a stage in the eternal career of uninterrupted existence. The alarms of conscience, which, in the barren region of in-

fidelity, are too painful to be endured, because barbed with sharp points by the very uncertainty of the subject, are here kindly alleviated by the evangelical mercy, which I pray God to apply to your fear. God appears, in the person of his Son, in a character of benignity, with which reason unaided dared not to invest him. A method of reconciliation is exhibited, in which the sufferings, and excellence, and death of Jesus are the principal features, by which the hopes of the trembling penitent are awakened, the humble and doubting Christian is continually encouraged. Faith lends us her hand to lead us through the dark "valley of the shadow of death," and accompanies us to the throne of her forgiving God, where love reigns forever, to encourage the pious confidence of the pilgrims who are continually arriving from the weary passage of their earthly existence. Methinks I hear a voice from heaven, saying unto me, "Write, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord!"

3 2044 024 480 2

THE BORROWER WILL BE CHARGED AN OVERDUE FEE IF THIS BOOK IS NOT RETURNED TO THE LIBRARY ON OR BEFORE THE LAST DATE STAMPED BELOW. NON-RECEIPT OF OVERDUE NOTICES DOES NOT EXEMPT THE BORROWER FROM OVERDUE FEES.

WIDENER
APR 27 1995
CANCELLED
WIDENER
APR 16 1995
BOOK DUE
CANCELLED
STALL STUDY
CHARGE